

Christ the Servant

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[0 : 00] I never take my watch off, I'm reminded of a story that I was told by the wife of a man who was in the last parish, I was in the wife of Kenny Ban, who may be known to some of you.

And it's a story about a wee boy who was in the service, I think it was probably one of Kenny Ban's services and there was no clock in the church, I felt like there's no clock in this hall just now, which is a dangerous thing to do.

It's good for you, it's not good for me. And so the minister used to regularly at the beginning of the service take off his watch and just put it there and the wee boy said to his mum, what does it mean when the minister takes his watch off and puts it in front of him at the beginning of the service and his mother said, it means nothing son, absolutely nothing.

Anyway, John chapter 13 is our focus and again let's pray for a moment. Heavenly Father we acknowledge that apart from you we can do nothing and so we pray that as we sit before your word that you would draw near to us and that you would give us all that we need to be able to speak and think and respond in faith.

Our desire is that we would learn more of who you are. Our desire is that you would be glorified in this place. Our desire is that we would see more of Jesus our Saviour, the one who has opened up the way so that we may know life, so that we may be able to come into your presence even as we pray.

[1 : 46] We thank you for Jesus. We thank you for all that will be remembered in this place over these days. For his sacrifice in our place, for his body broken for us, for his blood shed for us so that we may receive that forgiveness that the psalmist cried out for.

Lord, we pray that you would create in us that clean heart. Lord, that you would put in us that right spirit. Father, that you would minister to us as we look in hope and with expectation to you.

We pray all these things in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Well, as we come back to this passage that I read, we come to a situation where there is a meal.

The disciples are meeting with Jesus in that place and they are gathering together to prepare and to have supper. And for many who are here this evening, especially those who are more mature in years, looking back, I think it's fair to say that there was much that was shared, much more than food.

Much that was shared in terms of experience and learning, wisdom at the dinner table. I can think back to childhood days in Ness.

[3 : 31] And maybe it was because I was a wee boy, but it seemed like we would sit at the table for hours. I think we actually did sit at the table for hours. And yes, food would be eaten, but there was stories and there was lessons and there was all kinds of experiences and things that seemed to be shared.

There was no TV in the background. There seemed to be a whole lot more time in these days than we have now, which is ironic, seeing as we have so many time-saving devices. But as the family came together to eat, there was intimacy and much was learned as wisdom and stories were passed down from one generation to another.

Turning to this passage, John 13, we see Jesus and his disciples here as they gather together to have supper. And this is something that would have been done many, many times before.

It's something that would not have been a new experience for them. But this occasion that we have recorded for us was, it was a different, it was a different kind of supper.

Because Jesus was about to do something here. Something that they would remember. Something that was different.

[4 : 53] Something that they didn't fully understand at the time, but they would understand later. Something not just for the benefit of the disciples back then on that day, but also for our benefit.

As we gather around the Lord's Word this evening. So I want to just consider, very simply with you this evening, various lessons over supper.

I have eight short points that I want to lift just straight from the text. We had Callum from Shabbos with us over the last few days. He told us he's a Trinitarian.

Every sermon, three points, all beginning with the same letter. I'm afraid I don't have his gifts. And so I am just going to step through the first few verses of this text.

And lift eight short points from it as we observe how the verses progress. And the first thing to note in these verses is the knowledge of Jesus.

[6 : 02] Jesus knew. That's the first point. Jesus knew. And we're made aware of the knowledge of Christ three times, even in the verses before us.

In verse one, we read that Jesus knew that his hour had come. In verse three, we read Jesus knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands.

Verse 11, we read again, for he knew who was to betray him. So we have that underlined for us from the outset. The knowledge of Jesus.

Jesus knew so much of what was going on on this occasion. He knew everything that was going on. For the disciples, so much of this was shrouded in mystery.

There was so much of this that would have been enigmatic to them. But Jesus knew what was happening. We're told in verse one, this was just before, it was the week before Passover.

[7 : 03] And in that Passover, the Jews, as they gathered, they looked back the way. They looked back to Exodus 12 as we have it. And they remembered God's mercy.

They remembered how all those who had the blood sprinkled over the lintel were spared. God passed over when he saw the blood.

And the Jews remembered God's mercy and his salvation on that occasion as they looked back. But Jesus, he knew that the Passover pointed forward to him.

And he knew that the blood that would be shed would be his blood for the remission of sin.

Jesus knew what was to come. Jesus knew the purposes of God. Together with the Father and the Holy Spirit.

[8 : 09] Before time began, it was agreed. This was the way that men would be saved. Jesus knew, verse 3, that the Father had given all things into his hands.

He knew, verse 3, that he had come from God and was now going back, returning to God. He knew, verse 1, that his hour had come.

He knew, verse 2, that Satan had entered Judas. He knew about all that laid ahead of him in the work of salvation.

Our Lord knew about the arrest that was to come. He knew about the flogging. He knew about the trial. He knew about the false evidence.

The distorted testimonies. He knew that the crowds would turn on him. He knew that Pilate would capitulate and give them what they wanted.

[9 : 22] He knew about the cross. He knew about the cross. Jesus knew about the pain that he would suffer and endure.

But still, Jesus loved. The second point. The knowledge of Jesus and secondly, the love of Jesus.

Verse 1, still having loved his own, it says, who were in the world. We see again here, as we see all the way through Scripture, the love of Christ.

We're given this window here into the mind of Christ and the emotions of Christ in this moment. It's a staggering thing to think about.

That despite all that he knew, still he loved his own. Still he loved them. I'm sure we've all had occasion at some point or another to be in a room with people that we struggle to love.

[10 : 43] Maybe you're at a community meeting or something like that. You're sitting in a group with a few people. And you know that some of the people that you're looking across at have said things about you in the past which have been hurtful.

You know they've acted in ways that have been deceitful and derogatory towards you. You know about them. Somebody's told you, but they don't know that you know. We've all been in that situation, these kind of meetings.

Sometimes we look across at people and they smile at us and they act as if they are our most loyal friends. But in reality you know what they're thinking.

And you know what they're capable of. And we sit in these meetings sometimes and I don't know how we feel. We kind of boil inside.

We struggle to make eye contact. Maybe there's a quiet rage. Maybe there's the beginnings of bitterness. That might be all the kind of things that go through our minds and quell up from within us.

[11:49] But would we say that we have love? Would we say that we have love? That we hold within our hearts for those who hurt us and those who we know have grievances against us and speak them out?

It's probably not the first emotion. It's probably not the first emotion. It's probably not the first word that comes to our mind. And yet Jesus is here and he has all that is before him in prospect. And he knows all that he did.

And yet he loves them. He knows their past. And if we did a quick survey into the past and looked at the character of the disciples, how many times did they let him down?

How slow they were to learn? How quick they were to doubt? How many failures are on their CV? Jesus knew all this. He could remember all this looking back.

He knew about their repeated failures. He knew about their lack of faith looking back. But he knew also what was to come. Knowing that Judas would betray him.

[13:07] Knowing that Peter would deny him. Knowing that the disciples, as he went to the cross, would scatter. And yet still, as he sat with them.

As he looked them in the eye, he loved them. Despite everything, he still loved them.

And is that not for us this evening? Such a huge comfort. Such a huge encouragement.

That just as Jesus knew the disciples then, he knows us. We sang of it in Psalm 139.

He knows us. He knows our history. He knows how many times we've let him down. He knows our track record.

[14:12] He knows our present frame of mind. He knows our imminent failures. He knows about the lack of commitment that sometimes mars our lives. He knows about the secret sins that no one else knows about.

He knows about the broken promises. He knows about the broken sins that no one else knows about. He knows about that. and yet still he loves us. It's important that we note that as we come to the table.

It's an encouragement that we need, as we are called to come to the table. As we examine ourselves, we see our sin. Jesus sees it more clearly.

Still he loves us. Still he calls his own to come and profess their faith in him. Jesus knew, Jesus loved.

Thirdly, Jesus showed out that love. We see that again in verse 1. In the ESV we have it, having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end.

[15:22] Another translation has it that he showed them the full extent of his love. Not only did he have love for them in his heart, but he showed out that love that he had.

We see that love of Christ in action being enacted in the verses before us. And that love that Jesus had was shown out consistently in his life and ministry.

He loved them to the end. And during this supper, he was about to show out his love for them in an act that would astonish them.

An act that would actually horrify them in the moment. Because the fourth point that we have here is simply to note in verse 4 and 5 that Jesus washed their feet.

Jesus washed their feet. Now, today, I don't think we much like the idea of washing anybody else's feet.

[16:31] In the last congregation I was in, there was a girl who, that was her job. She, she dealt every day with people's feet. She'd come back with the most horrific stories.

I used to think it was the worst job in the world. We don't like the idea of touching each other's feet and washing each other's feet. And yet, all of us, as far as I can see, have got our feet covered up.

We're walking around with shoes and boots on. But, in Jesus' day, there was no such luxuries.

None of the disciples are there with their feet all covered with leather.

And so, daily as they traveled from place to place, the mud and the dirt of the day was sticking to them. The cuts and the infections marking these unpleasant feet.

So, to say this was an unpleasant job in Jesus' day is a massive understatement. This was considered to be the worst of all jobs. The commentators tell us that this was a job that not even the Jewish slave was ever asked to do.

[17:41] Such was the lack of dignity. The putrility of this task. This was beneath a Jew, they agreed. And yet, what we see here is the king of the Jews donning the slave apron and stooping down to the lowest level of the servant and washing the feet of sinners.

Now, John's gospel, we know as a gospel, the way John writes in the gospels and his letters is full of contrast. I want to just take one moment to consider a contrast between chapter 12 and chapter 13.

Flick back to chapter 12 for a moment, the beginning of it. At the beginning of chapter 12, I'm going to take the time to read it, but we have here Jesus at another dinner occasion, another dinner party, and at that dinner party it's a film of your passage we read of Mary.

And we see her and she's bowed low before Jesus and she's worshipping. She's pouring out this expensive perfume over his feet and then she's drying his feet with her hair.

And that's a picture that sticks with us. It's a picture that was and it still remains a striking picture. Such extravagant, costly worship and devotion.

[19:20] But as we look at that picture, within our hearts we respond by saying, that's right. that's right. That's something that we should read.

That's fitting of our Lord. That she should be responding to him in that way because Jesus is worthy of that kind of worship. And so it's right to show that costly love and adoration and devotion to him. So we scan these verses and we nod in agreement, but we come to chapter 13 and we have this contrast. because in chapter 13 at this supper occasion we see Jesus the God-man, the perfect, pure Jesus, God the Son, the King of Kings, the Lord of Lords with the apron round his waist and his sleeves rolled up.

And we have this picture painted in our mind of him carefully washing the dirty, filthy, stinking feet of the unworthy disciples.

And as we contrast that with the previous chapter within us, we say that's wrong. We're not comfortable reading that.

[20:39] That Jesus would be stooping so low. And that's the kind of reaction that was in in Peter.

So the next thing that we see here at point five is Peter objected. Jesus washed the feet of the disciples, but as he came to Peter, Peter raised his hand and objected.

Peter was always the one who was the first to say what everybody else was thinking, but was too shy to say. And so as Jesus comes to Peter, Peter says, no, no, that's enough.

I shouldn't be seeing this. Jesus verse 8, you shall never wash my feet. This is not right.

We can just imagine Peter indignant at what he's seeing, saying, you know, I can wash my own feet. I can wash feet for you, Jesus, but you shall never wash my feet.

[21:44] That takes us to the sixth point. Jesus answered, verse 8. And Jesus' answer is so striking. One translation says, unless I wash you, you have no part with me.

The ESV, it says here, if I do not wash you, you have no share with me. No share, no part with me if I don't wash you. They're unsettling words because they're so black and white.

They're so definitive. they're so clear. Unless I wash you, you have no part, you have no share with me, says Jesus. And these words resonated on that day, but they still resonate on this day.

Because this scenario is still being played out in many lives. words, and I don't know you as a congregation. I see one or two faces I recognize, but I don't know you.

But my expectation is there may be Peters here this evening. And with Peter, your intentions in some measure may be good.

[23:03] You may have a sense of the holiness and the worthiness of Christ. But perhaps with Peter, your response to him in this area is all wrong.

Because as Jesus comes with the basin, stooped down, ready to wash your feet, perhaps there are some who are saying, no, not me.

I'm not worthy. I'm not worthy of this. Jesus, you shouldn't have to do this for me. Not for me. And to you, Jesus says, as he said to Peter, unless I wash you, you have no part with me.

one commentator says this, Mark Johnston says, it is precisely at this point that many people stumble at the message of the gospel.

The thought of Christ having to do so much for them, as opposed to their being able to offer something to him, is too much for them to accept.

[24 : 29] And I think this is probably the biggest problem in every church. I think probably the thing that keeps most people from coming to Christ and professing faith in him is not a life of drinking drugs and rock and roll, maybe for some, but for the majority, that's not the barrier, that's not the obstacle.

It's not the lure of other religions. More commonly, it's pride. It's that respectable sin of the middle classes.

It's that refusal to accept that we can do nothing and Jesus has to do so much for us. I was getting my youngest daughter ready for school, not for school, for nursery, for scullary this morning.

It was one of these days where she just wanted to battle with me at every point. I was trying to feed her breakfast and with every mouth, no, no, no, I can do myself.

And she can, but we didn't have the three hours that it takes for her to do it herself. It came to brushing her hair, no, no, I can do it myself. Brushing teeth, no, I can, no, I can do it, I can do it.

[26 : 03] Trying to get her boots on to get her out the door, no, I can do it all myself. love. And so often, you know, that attitude is in us right the way through life.

And sometimes in the things of God. Our pride is so quick to protest. We want to be able to say so often, I can do it myself.

But when it comes to our being cleansed from sin, when it comes to our being made right with God, we cannot do it ourselves.

No matter how many good works we might try and do, no matter how many church services we may go to, we cannot cleanse ourselves.

no matter how good our family heritage may be, how many uncles we had that were ministers, how many people that we can look back into our history and see we're godly people.

[27 : 16] We cannot do it ourselves and they can do nothing for us. Only Christ can cleanse us. And so as he offers to cleanse us, we must not object like Peter.

We must not refuse to let Jesus wash us. I hope this is making some kind of sense.

I hope this is something that we can grasp and we can understand. I know that when Jesus was with his disciples, he makes clear to them that what he was doing, verse 7, although they didn't understand it then, they would understand it later.

And maybe we struggle to make the connection between Jesus washing of feet back then and what this has to do with us just now on this evening as we make our approach to the Lord's table.

So what was Jesus actually talking about here? What more is going on in this situation? Well, in essence, this situation was an acted-out parable.

[28 : 44] This was a picture that Jesus was acting out that was pointing forward to another picture. And this picture seemed wrong, but the picture that this was pointing forward to would seem all the more wrong, even more outrageous, even more grotesque than what Jesus was having to do here.

because this points forward to, and this would only be understood in the light of the cross, where the Son of Man who came to serve and not be served, gave his life as a ransom for many.

This points forward to that pinnacle of history, sinless Son of God, where the innocent, righteous, perfect God-man, the Lord of Lord, the King of Kings, cleansed the hearts of sinners.

and not with water, but with his shed blood. This is where the disciples are being led.

This is what Jesus is looking to. This is what Jesus is pointing to. He's pointing to his cross. God's grace. Let me give you three quotes from commentators on this passage, just to bed this in.

[30 : 33] J.C. Ryle writes on this passage, no man or woman can be saved unless his sins are washed away in Christ's precious blood. nothing else can make us clean and acceptable before God.

That's what it's being pointed to. Bruce Millen writes, in the wonder of Jesus' self-giving love, he stoops to the cross, and as God's Passover lamb submits to slaughter on our behalf, to wash us clean from all our moral filth and guilt.

Like Peter, as long as we imagine that we can get by without Christ's cleansing blood, we cannot be saved. Matthew Henry lastly, Christ washed his disciples' feet that he might signify to them the cleansing of the soul from the pollutions of sin.

And that would be affected, that would be worked out, that would be done at Calvary. This is the message.

This is the only way that we can be clean. this is the only way that a sinner can be saved. This is the only way that we can have power, that we can have a share with Jesus.

[32 : 17] This is the only way that we can have fellowship with God. This is the only way that we can be made fit to come to the table.

we must come first to the cross and allow Jesus to wash us with his blood.

And when Peter realized his need to be washed, he responded and that's the penultimate point.

Peter responded in verse 9, characteristically Peter.

he responds with great enthusiasm by saying, not just my feet then, but my hands and my head as well, everything. And Peter was saying in response, Jesus, I do want to have a part with you.

I do want to be yours. So wash me. Do everything needed. Wash me, wash all of me. And although Jesus needed to correct Peter's thinking in part in this response, and there's no time for us to go down that road tonight, in essence, it was the right response.

[33 : 38] Peter saw his need of cleansing and so he cried out with great gusto that Jesus would make him clean. And that was Peter's response, but is that your response?

we responded in these terms yet to Jesus with that humble plea saying, wash me.

I see my sin. Let a man examine himself. What do we see when God helps us to examine ourselves? We see our sin.

So when we see our sin, what should we say? Wash me. Cleanse me. forgive me. It's the only fitting response to Christ.

And it's the only response that brings with it Jesus' promise. It's the final point, the eighth point.

Jesus promised and he promised this to Peter and he promises this to all the Peters of today.

[34 : 50] Jesus gives these words of assurance, this firm promise which would be all the more precious in light of all that Peter was to fail and default and over the next few days.

Jesus looks to Peter and he says to Peter, verse 10, you are clean. You have part, you have share with me.

And the word part that's used there, meros, is a word that's used in relation to an inheritance. It's the word that's used in relation to the prospect of something precious that was to come.

So Jesus says to Peter, you are clean, you have part. with me. So what was promised to Peter?

What is the assurance that was given to the disciples then and is still the assurance of the disciples now? Is there an inheritance? Is there something that we can look forward to, not just in time but for eternity?

[36 : 01] Well there is. We just have to go a page over to get a glimpse into it. Look at John chapter 14. Time is long gone but even there just we see the essence of the promise.

We see the part that is promised to those who are trusting in Christ. Christ. Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me. In my father's house, says Jesus, there are many rooms.

If it were not so, I would have told you, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you?

And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and take, will take you to myself, that where I am, you may be also.

So the promise of Christ to the disciples then and to those who are trusting him now is that we will be with him. The second that we are cleansed, we will be with him.

We experience something of that in time and it's perfected in eternity where we will be with him and where we will be like him.

[37 : 17] That's his promise. And what comfort it yielded and what comfort it continues to yield. Let me say just to finish, this is a promise to the cleansed and only to the cleansed.

This is a promise that can be claimed and taken hold of in faith by those whom Jesus has washed, heart-washed, and that's why on that day Jesus said you are clean though not every one of you.

And perhaps these words go around this hall this evening, you are clean though not every one of you. and so the question we ask to finish is where do we fit in this picture?

Are we clean? It's a crucial question coming to the table. Are we clean? Are we clean? Have we been washed by Jesus?

Jesus. Because by way of warning, we have that name here, Judas. Judas who heard better sermons than we will ever hear.

[38 : 59] Judas who came closer to Christ than any of us ever have or will in this world. Judas who came so close and yet was lost and who had no part with Jesus and who has no part with Jesus and who will never have that part with Jesus.

We have the warning and the figure of Judas and for him the day of opportunity is gone for us. Now is the day this is the time of salvation and as Jesus comes to us through his word by his spirit let him wash us let him cleanse us in the blood that was shed so that we can have eternal part with Christ and then take your stand and profess his name and come as a cleansed sinner to take your place at his table we pray our heavenly father we thank you again for your word to us and we pray that as we think upon these things and as we remember all that was enacted on that evening we pray that as we prepare to come to the

Lord's table we ask Lord that there would be none here who would refuse to let Christ wash them we thank you that there is power in the blood we thank you that Christ's blood is enough to cleanse us from all our sin and so we pray that each one of us would have that assurance that we are cleansed still we struggle with sin but Lord we thank you that if we have looked to Christ if we have trusted in him we have that assurance that we are clean we have that promise so enable us we pray to put our faith in Jesus and to know that that promise is for us when we pray these things in Jesus name Amen in then let's ün we would eru