

John 13:31-35

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[0 : 00] Lord Jesus, we have just heard that the Father has given all things into your hands. And that means that we are in your hands.

And so I pray you would open our eyes to see who you are. You would open our hearts to receive you. And you would strengthen our hands and our feet to live as you did. We pray this in your name and for your glory. Amen. You can be seated. We are going to be looking at John chapter 13.

That's on page 900 of the Bible right in front of you. I welcome you to open it. I love John 13. Because through one really simple act that any of us can understand. Jesus shows us who he is. And what he has come to do.

[1 : 02] And how all of us should respond. The context for us is given in verse 1. It says, now before the feast of the Passover.

Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart out of the world to the Father. Jesus knows it's his time to die.

But his death, we're told in verse 1, will not be the end of him. Listen again. It says, his hour had come to depart out of the world to the Father. Somehow, through death, Jesus will transcend death. And he'll return to his Father in heaven. He's the Passover lamb who takes away the sin of the world. He's about to bear the punishment for our sins and our wickedness.

So that we might receive forgiveness. And verse 1 tells us he knows all this already. More than that, we're told he is choreographing and commanding all the events that are about to take place.

[2 : 11] Look at verse 3. It says, Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come from God, and was going back to God, rose from supper.

The Father has given all things into his hands. Jesus knows where he came from, and he knows where he is going.

And in between the past and the future, in his present, he knows that all authority belongs to him. And so what does the Lord of the universe do with all that authority?

John tells us in verse 4. He stands up. He gets up from the supper. He lays aside his outer garments. He takes a towel.

He ties it around his waist. He pours water into a basin. And he began to wash his disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel that was wrapped around him. Respectable people back then wore two layers of clothing.

[3 : 19] An outer robe and an under robe. The outer robe was a sign of status. It showed that you weren't a slave. But the under robe, well, that was the common clothing that everyone wore.

And that was the uniform of servants and slaves. Jesus takes off his outer robe. He sheds his status. The disciples would have stopped eating and stared at him in shock.

What on earth is Jesus doing? Shameful to remove your outer robe in this way. Jesus takes a towel. He ties it around his waist.

He pours water into a basin. And he begins to wash his disciples' feet. This act is absolutely scandalous. The lowest slave in the household washed feet.

Many Jewish teachers said that this task was so degrading that Jews weren't allowed to do it. Only Gentile slaves could wash Jewish feet.

[4 : 25] And yet here, Jesus, the Son of God, the one whom the Father has given all things into his hands, performs this act of abject humility and service.

This is how a preacher named Severian put it 1,600 years ago. He who wraps the heavens in clouds wrapped around himself a towel.

He who pours the water into the rivers and pools tipped water into a basin. And he before whom every knee bends in heaven and on earth and under the earth knelt to wash the feet of his disciples.

Jesus came not to be served, but to serve. And to give his life as a ransom for many. Tonight he kneels to wash their feet.

Tomorrow he will be stretched and hung from a cross to wash away their sin. He who is in the form of God empties himself. And he takes the form of a slave.

[5 : 29] The Son of God willingly becomes a man. As a man, he becomes a servant. As a servant, he becomes our sacrificial lamb who dies in our place.

That we might be embraced into his as beloved children of God. Amongst religious people, there are two extreme reactions to what Jesus does.

And both of them are the wrong response. And Peter responds in both those ways in John chapter 13. So the first wrong response to Jesus' sacrificial service is in verse 8.

Peter sees what Jesus is doing. And he replies, You will never wash my feet. Some respond to Jesus with pride.

We think, I'm a good person. I don't need saving. I don't need Jesus to wash me. I can be religious and righteous without him.

[6 : 39] You will never wash my feet. Sometimes we hear about Jesus' self-sacrifice, his service, his suffering for our sake. And we're offended that the thought that our sin is that serious.

Jesus answers Peter's self-righteous pride in verse 8. If I do not wash you, you have no share with me. Jesus punctures any notion any of us might have of self-righteousness by saying, If I do not save you, then you are lost.

If I do not clean you, then you will be filthy forever. So to those who are self-righteous, Jesus reveals there is no health in us.

We cannot save ourselves. We need a savior. We need Jesus to do for us what we cannot do for ourselves, to cleanse us from our sin.

The second wrong response to Jesus is the exact opposite of pride. In verse 9, Peter flips to the furthest extreme.

[7 : 56] And he says, Lord, not only my feet, but also wash my hands and my head. This is the response of a believer who sees their sin and sorrows over it.

And because of the gravity of their sin, they don't feel it's possible. To be made clean. This is a response of someone who doubts God's grace is big enough to cover their sinfulness.

This person doubts and despairs because they feel that Jesus will reject them. They doubt their salvation because they can't see past their sin. And so they respond to Jesus, not with self-righteousness, but with self-loathing and despair.

And I like to imagine Jesus kneeling before Peter, looking up at him, smiling lovingly, at Peter's idealism and flip-flopping from one extreme, you'll never wash me, to five seconds later, wash me everywhere!

From pride to despair, from self-righteousness to self-loathing. And in verse 10, Jesus says gently, the one who is bathed does not need to wash, except for his feet, but is completely clean.

[9 : 11] And you are clean. That word completely that Jesus uses, it can be translated perfectly. You're perfectly clean. You've already been washed completely.

That word completely could also be translated unto the end. It's the same word you see in verse 1 of our passage. Jesus loved his disciples to the end. He loves us completely.

He loves us perfectly. The point is that if Jesus has washed you, you are perfectly clean. You are clean unto the end.

He will lose none of those whom the Father has given him. Yes, we still sin. Every week we gather and we confess, and we hear again the words of assurance, and absolution, and gospel wash over us.

Yes, our feet get dirty still, and we're in need to keep having them washed as we try to walk towards Jesus in this dirty, dark world.

[10 : 19] We still stumble. Every day we need God's grace. But if you are in Christ, you are completely clean.

Clean unto the end. Nothing can separate you from the love of God. Preacher Tim Keller would often say, the gospel is this.

We are more flawed in ourselves than we ever dared believe. And yet at the same time, we are more loved and accepted in Jesus Christ than we ever dared hope. This is why Jesus came. This is his hour. And this simple action, washing feet, displays why he has come and what he will accomplish. It shows us why Jesus is about to die and what his death will achieve.

He is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world, who washes our souls through his most precious blood to remove all the dirt and the stain of sin.

[11 : 23] He comes to serve and to save both the self-righteous and the self-loathing alike. And he comes and he kneels at your feet in slaves' clothes and he asks, will you let me make you completely clean?

After Jesus has finished this unbelievable act, he dresses himself and he sits back down at the table and he teaches his disciples. Look at verse 12.

Do you understand what I have done to you? You call me teacher and Lord and you're right, for so I am. And if I then, your Lord and teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet.

Jesus comes and he gives himself to serve and to cleanse his disciples. In one gesture, he enacts his entire understanding of his life and mission and now he gives the proper response in light of who he is and what he has done.

Verse 15. For I have given you an example so that you should do just as I have done to you. The word mandi comes from the Latin mandatum.

[12 : 33] Mandate means commandment and the commandment it refers to is in verse 34 of John 13. Jesus says, a new commandment I give to you that you love one another.

So tonight, in light of these words, Jesus invites all of us to do two things. First, to receive Christ's cleansing. Do not let either pride or despair keep you from his grace.

He kneels before you and he offers to make you completely clean. And once we have received Christ's cleansing, the second thing we're invited to do is to follow Christ's example.

The Lord who kneels to wash our feet now calls us to kneel before one another, to serve one another, to forgive one another, to love one another as he has loved us.

Amen. Amen.