

Peter Has a Lot to Learn

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 21 April 2021

Preacher: Rev Kenneth I Macleod

[0 : 0 0] John 13 and reading verses 7 and 8. John 13 verses 7 and 8. Jesus answered him, What I am doing you do not understand now, but afterwards you will understand.

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. Now, the washing of the disciples' feet is, I suppose it's one of the incidents in the Bible that we're all very, very familiar with.

Particularly when we come to a communion time, it's often a passage that is reflected on. There are certain passages, whether it's like in the Garden of Gethsemane or here we have the washing of the disciples' feet as a way of preparing for the communion time.

And Jesus knew, it tells us at the beginning of the chapter, he was aware of the heavenly timetable that he was keeping. And he was very aware that the hour that he had come into this world for, with everything that was coming together, he realized that that time was just about on him.

That's why he says at the beginning, when Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart out of this world to the Father. And one of the things that I suppose strikes us here is that Jesus, despite knowing what lay ahead of him, his whole demeanor in the upper room is so calm.

[1 : 4 1] People often highlight that, that there's this calmness and composure about him, which would be very different to the way that we would probably react. You and I know that if, if there's something really stressful, something that we're really uptight about, something we're really, really worried about, and it's just ahead of us, it's very difficult to retain a calmness and composure.

And yet we find that Jesus retains the calmness and composure, even although he knows of the horrors that are just about to unfold.

Because we know that when he went to the garden of Gethsemane, he was so troubled in his soul that he asked if it were possible that the cup would pass from him.

He sweated, as it were, drops of blood. So the pressure on Jesus was so intense and immense that we find this incredible spiritual and physical reaction from him.

And yet here in the upper room, just prior to that, there's this calmness, this composure. But there's also the anticipation that would be in his heart of what was to follow his death.

[3 : 1 1] Because we know that there was going to be the great, the great exaltation. And Jesus was aware of that because we're told, for instance, in Hebrews, that this was the joy that was set before him, why he endured the cross.

So that all the time, although he was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, he was aware of what lay ahead beyond all that, which was this great joy.

So Jesus, all the time, is showing this great calmness and composure. And what's also beautiful is that his main thought seems to be about his disciples, that he's caring for them.

He's interested in them. He's thoughtful about them. He's planning for them. And everything he's doing, he's doing for their benefit and for their good.

And so we find that Jesus, at this particular time, that he gets up after the supper and he washes the disciples' feet.

[4 : 23] Now, as we know, the custom of the day was that everybody wore sandals. And they had just walked from Bethany to Jerusalem for the Passover. And, of course, their feet would be dirty and dusty from walking in the sandy roads, dusty roads.

And, as we know, it was the custom then that when you went anywhere for a meal or something like that, that the host would have that the guests at their feet would be washed.

In fact, it was one of the things that, remember, Jesus complained against Simon. Remember when he had been invited for a meal and how the woman came in and began to anoint the feet of Jesus and Simon found fault with that.

And Jesus said, you never even provided for my feet to be washed. So it was the custom that the guests would make provision, very often by a servant or slave or whatever, to wash the guests' feet.

So we find here that Jesus, that he now gets up and he does for the disciples this thing.

[5 : 36] And, of course, he's teaching them, he's instructing them, because Jesus never did something just for effect. He did it always in order to teach, to instruct, to direct, and give a very clear picture to his people.

Now, it's wonderful what Jesus is doing here, because, as we say, if any person had a, you could say, had a right to be sorry for himself at that moment, to be completely preoccupied with himself, it was Jesus, when you think of what lay ahead.

But all his thoughts were to his disciples. And the very reverse, of course, was true of them. Because when he needed them the most, they failed.

Remember, he told them to pray, to watch and to pray. Remember when Jesus was praying in the Garden of Gethsemane? Did they pray? No. They all slumbered and slept.

And then, of course, that awful moment when he was arrested, what do we find the disciples doing? They all forsook him and fled. So, Jesus' example is a very opposite to what his disciples had actually done.

[6 : 59] Now, John doesn't tell us, but if we went to Luke's account, we find something extraordinary happening. Because the disciples, at this particular point, were having a discussion, in fact, a pretty hot discussion, as to which of them was the greatest.

It's really quite remarkable when you think of what they were doing. And here is Jesus, and he's just about to give us life. And yet, they were having this dispute.

It tells us in Luke's Gospel, and there was strife among them, which of them should be counted the greatest? You know, it really is quite extraordinary.

They'd be saying to themselves, right, they would be putting forward the suggestion as to why they would say, I don't know whether it would be John or Peter or James or anything, they'd be saying, Well, I'm more important to Jesus for this reason.

I think I'm the most important because of this. I feel that I'm the most gifted. Can you not see how Jesus relied on me on this occasion?

[8 : 08] And this was their discussion. This was their argument. A heated discussion as to which of them was counted the greatest. And, you know, you can't look at that without thinking and being reminded of how often strife breaks out amongst God's people.

In the most, in these sort of things. And, you know, when you look through the history of the church, and you look at all the division and the breakup and the strife that there has been, very often, it is because of pride.

It is because of egos. It is because of the lust for power. It is because of people's determination to get their own way. And often these things can be paraded in a different guise.

And people will try and do it. And they're saying, Oh, I'm doing this for God's cause. I'm doing it for the honor of Christ. Very often it's for selfish motives. It's power struggles.

Right throughout the history of the church, these things have been happening. Paul was addressing these things in all the churches. And God who knows our hearts and knows everything about us.

[9 : 23] I'm sure as the Lord has looked down over his church over the years. It must be one of the most disturbing things. Of course, God knows all things is to see there has been so much strife.

And Jesus, in the face of what these disciples are doing, gets up and gives this tremendous demonstration of what being a servant really is all about.

It is about giving. It is not about lauding it over others. It's not about parading a person's abilities or skills or gifts or any of these things. It is to be servant to one another.

And of course, to be servant to the Lord. And so Jesus comes and he starts washing the disciples' feet. And of course, we read there that he goes round each one.

And I can almost imagine that at this particular moment, when Jesus gets up, takes a basin and the water, and he wraps a towel around himself, that the disciples' eyes would be nearly popping out of their head.

[10 : 39] And they'd be saying, what's happening? This shouldn't be happening. And you could almost imagine there'd be a kind of a silence. It might be a wee whisper amongst each other. And wonder, what on earth is going on here?

And so Jesus comes to Simon and Peter, being Peter, couldn't control himself. And he's really saying, what are you doing? Why are you doing this?

Jesus, of course, comes with a timeless answer. What I am doing now, you do not understand. But afterwards, you will understand.

And how true that statement is. Because that is true in our lives as well. Because the Lord has done so many things in our lives that we don't understand.

One day we will. And as you look back, as I look back over my life, the one thing we know is that life has not gone exactly the way we anticipated or thought.

[11 : 38] Maybe many things did. But your heart has been broken in ways that you never thought. You shed tears behind coffins you never thought you would be standing beside.

Your life has been parted from those who are so precious and dear to you. Your life has taken twists and turns that have completely baffled you and bamboozled you and hurt you.

But you can hear in the background the voice of Jesus saying, what I'm doing now, you don't understand, but you will. And that is true for every single one of us.

There will come a day when we will understand. Where the mystery of his providence will become plain to us.

But of course, Peter, being Peter, says, you shall never wash my feet. And, you know, Peter is saying here, you shall never wash my feet.

[12 : 37] And what's happening? Very simply, Peter's will has come into conflict with Christ's will. And I wonder how often, maybe not as boldly as Peter, we might not have said to the Lord, no, never.

But we have, in our own quiet way, we've had our nevers before the Lord where we've resisted the Lord. You might be resisting the Lord tonight.

Maybe the Lord is, through his spirit, has been dealing with you for quite some time, through the spirit, through the word, where he's challenging you about your life.

Maybe something in your life and you are resisting submitting to the Lord. There's something of the Peter's never in it. Maybe not as boldly as that. Maybe you're not saying to the Lord, oh, never, I will never.

But you're not giving in to the Lord. Maybe the Lord is wanting you to go somewhere and you're saying, no, no, Lord, no, no, I can't.

[13 : 40] Or to do something and you're saying, no, Lord, I can't. Well, that's what Peter is doing. He's saying, no, never. And, you know, if Peter had continued to say to the Lord, no, you're not going to wash my feet, what a blessing he would have missed out.

And, you know, there are times that we can also miss out the blessings that God has for us when we adopt the never attitude of Peter. And that is why we must learn to submit before the will of God.

So that even in these things that sometimes where we don't understand, that we will receive the blessing that he has for us. And so the Lord said to Peter very simply, well, if I do not wash you, you have no share with me.

And that really got to Peter. You have no share with me. And, you know, that's what the Lord is saying. The Lord is saying to us, if I don't wash you, you have no, in the AV it is, you have no part with me.

Here it is, you have no share with me. You don't share. What do we share with the Lord? Well, we're told, for instance, that once we accept the Lord Jesus Christ as our Savior, that we become heirs with him.

[15 : 07] We become heirs and joint heirs with Christ. We are going to share everything. This is the amazing thing that as mediator, there is prepared for us the most incredible glory where we share with Christ.

But he says, if I don't wash you, you have no share with me. You have no part with me. You know how we're told that the Lord will say to those who have rejected him, depart from me.

So in a sense, you could say, if we don't have a part with Christ, at the end of the day, it will be depart. So it's either part or depart.

In order to share with Christ, we need to be washed by Christ. And that's what Jesus is telling Peter very simply. And, of course, then Peter, being Peter, he goes a full hog.

Oh, Lord, not just my feet, but the whole lot. Wash me all. And Jesus says, no, no, no. He said, and he tells very, very simply, he says, the one who has bathed does not need to wash except for his feet, but is completely clean.

[16 : 27] Of course, a person, if you're going to a meal or going out for a meal, you might bath. But through the walk there, your feet get dirty. And Jesus is very simply saying there is a once and for all bathing in the blood of Jesus Christ, where once and for all we are cleansed.

But every day we pick up through the sinful nature that we have and through our life in this world and through all the temptations about, we are picking up.

And we need this daily cleansing all the time. Once and for all washing, the washing of regeneration, the once and for all.

But we need this daily cleansing. And the very desire, every day, do we not go to the Lord and say, oh, Lord, please cleanse me from my sin.

Forgive me. And that is evidence of the fact that you've been bathed. You've been bathed in the blood of Jesus Christ. The fact that you go for this daily cleansing is evidence of the fact that you have already been washed completely.

[17 : 33] It's your great desire. Every day you're saying, oh, Lord, have mercy upon me. Lord, forgive me. You know that your sins have been forgiven. But you keep going back and going back and going back because you're aware of who you are and what you are.

So this is evidence of what has taken place. But, you know, you can't help but think of Jesus kneeling down there before Peter.

And Peter kind of horrified at what Jesus is doing. But, you know, Jesus did far more than kneel down before Peter. He was displaying his servanthood, displaying being a servant and kneeling before Peter and washing him.

But he did far more than that for Peter and for you and for me. He didn't just kneel down. He went all the way to the cross. And he took upon himself the wrath and the curse of our sin.

And that is what we are forever and ever indebted to him for what he has done for us.

[18 : 41] And so, in a sense, this chapter or this section, you could, in itself, it's a whole sermon. I mean, I'm not seeing anything that we haven't heard before.

But what it says there, for instance, Jesus, verse 3, 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, laid aside his outer garments, taking a towel, tied it around his waist, and so on.

And what he did there as a servant. It's a picture, really, where he got up, laid aside his outer garments, as it were, where this picture of laying aside his glory.

Although at one level he didn't, but we know that his glory was veiled in this world and that he became a human. He took to himself, look what it says.

He took a towel and tied it around his waist. It's almost like, in a sense, where he took human nature to himself. He became one with us.

[19 : 48] He became the ultimate servant. And then, of course, he did all that was required and then went back to the Father. We are always, as I say, in his debt.

May we tonight thank the Lord for what he has done for us. And in that little picture that he has before us, may it remind us also of our duties one to another.

That we have a responsibility of care and of love towards one another. And as Jesus says towards the end of this chapter, a new commandment I give you, that you love one another.

Just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this, all people will know that you are my disciples if you have love for one another.

And I believe that that is why the devil has done everything in his power, right down throughout the centuries, to divide God's people. So that they're wanting. Because it's a powerful witness.

[20 : 54] When a watching world can see the love that God's people have for one another. But if they see God's people at war one with another and devouring one another, the witness is lost.

And so I believe that that's where Satan has concentrated his efforts. It's always to try and get God's people to be at each other rather than loving one another.

And that's why Jesus gives this great commandment. And that we have this responsibility and this care and this love for one another.

Let's pray. Lord, we give thanks for just reflecting for a little tonight on what you have done, what you have set out before us. We give thanks, Lord, for your great love. And a love that is beyond anything that we can understand or comprehend.

And yet we give thanks, Lord, that we have been made recipients of your love. Not because of anything that we are in ourselves or deserve, but because of your great love towards us.

[22 : 02] And so we pray that you will be with us. Be with those who led us in prayer. Be with each and every one of us. Bless our homes and our families. And all whom we love and all who are laid aside at this time.

We commit to your care. Watch over us and do us good. And take us to our homes safely, we pray. Bless those who have gathered with us on Zoom. And we give thanks for the way we're able to meet together in this way.

Cleanse us from our sin. In Jesus' name we ask it. Amen.