

Living in Community

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[0 : 00] Good morning, everyone. So I'm going to be reading from John 13, 1 to 7. And it's all about Jesus washing his disciples' feet.

And I'm hoping Eve isn't in the room for this one. But before we do that, let me just pray. Lord, I just thank you that you have your word for us to learn by and to grow by.

But Lord, this word is for us to get to know you more. And to see the love that you have for us. And this chapter just shows everything that Jesus is to us.

The love that he has for us. And we pray that you will shine a light upon this word. That none of us will go away without something that has spoken to us today.

Each and every one of us, I pray that we have something that will speak to us today from this word. So I'm beginning with verse 13.

[1 : 04] It was just before Passover festival. Jesus knew that the hour had come for him to leave this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end.

The evening meal was in progress and the devil had already prompted Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot, to betray Jesus. Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under his power and that he had come from God and was returning to God.

So he got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing and wrapped a towel around his waist. After that, he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet, drying them with a towel that was wrapped around him.

He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, Lord, are you going to wash my feet? And Jesus replied, You do not realize now what I'm doing, but later you will understand.

No, Peter said, you shall never wash my feet. Jesus answered, Unless I wash you, you have no part with me. Then Lord Simon Peter replied, Not just my feet, but my hands and my head as well.

[2 : 15] Jesus answered, Those who have had a bath need only wash their feet. Their whole body is clean. And you are clean, though not every one of you. For he knew who was going to betray him, and that was why he said, Not everyone was clean.

When he had finished washing their feet, he put on his clothes and returned to his place. Do you understand what I have done for you? He asked them. 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.

Very truly I tell you, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them.

So this is a table scene, a tableau, a scene where Jesus is about to go into a time of celebration and of aberration. It was going to be a time that he was looking forward to, and he knew about, and it was a time when he actually didn't really look forward to it at all.

[3 : 30] And verse 3 tells us that Jesus knew the Father who put all things under his power, and that he had come from God and was returning to God. So that's what it was about. He was about to go to the cross.

But before that, he had to do one final task with the disciples, and he had to show them how to serve one another and then serve all the other one another's in whatever community they were in. Jesus had known from the beginning of time that this would be the most difficult time in his life. He knew that as a human and as God, he was about to take on his sinless body all the sin and the filth of the world.

And in this one act of washing filthy feet, he was going to show the disciples how to help the communities that they visited to remove the filth of their sin of their lives too.

So knowing that there would be an end to sin, this is where Jesus had that joy. His actions here must have had a sense of peace and joy in his heart because the sin that would become with Adam was now going to be dealt with, finally dealt with, and it was going to be the sin for the end of time was going to be dealt with.

[4 : 43] And this didn't mean that sin would stop. Because it's evident, isn't it? It's still around us. But let me assure you, it has been dealt with. Hebrews 9 tells us that Jesus did it to the very end of time.

And this is the profound statement of faith that we believe in. The belief is that there's a fact of history, it's a fact of life, and it's a fact of the Bible. Jesus died for our sins.

And this passage is the fifth in this series of learning the unforced rhythms of grace. And when I read that, I thought, well, my topic today is community, but what is an unforced rhythm of grace? And how are we going to learn about this? And how is it going to help us in our teachings and in our growth of what we do for the Lord? Well, in Matthew 11, 28 to 30, Breeze has actually brought an explanation of how we can learn that unforced rhythm of grace.

He said it quite clearly. It says this, Are you tired? Are you worn out? Burned out on religion? Come to me. Get away with me and you will cover your life.

[5 : 56] I'll show you how to take a real rest. Walk with me and work with me. Watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace. I won't lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you.

Keep company with me and you'll learn to live freely and lightly. Now, I imagine myself sitting on my bus, driving along, and there I am. I'm driving myself.

And when I'm driving myself, I'm still pretty much a learner. I've been driving for a good few years, but in the driving of life, I'm a learner. And sometimes I sort of change into second gear when I should be in first, and I change into fifth gear thinking I can go faster when I should be in second and slowing down.

And it's like Jesus is saying in this, Get off your bus, Sandy. Get off your bus, you lot out there. Get on mine. Watch how I drive. It's every time smooth.

Every gear is in the right place. When I stop, I stop for a reason. When I go, I go for a reason.

Watch me. Follow me. And then I'm going to let you go and do this.

[7 : 02] I'm going to show you how to do it. But it's not going to be hard on you. It's going to be so much easier than anything you can think of. So the unforced rhythm of grace is us looking at Jesus and copying Jesus, doing what Jesus did.

And as we read in this Bible, indeed, any passage in the Bible, we'll see any message about Jesus all the way through. And we're looking into a window of time when Jesus walked the earth as human.

He walked with us. Now, I wish I'd been there in one way, but I'm really glad I wasn't, because it was a lot tougher then than it is now. We seem to think it's tough now, but trust me, there weren't good dentists in those days, or doctors, or anything else.

Anyway, what he was doing was actually showing the disciples how to live an unforced rhythm of grace within the community of themselves and outside.

And he said in verse 15, I've set you an example that you should do as I've done for you. So let's look at what he did. And so we can imitate him.

[8 : 08] So what did Jesus do in this passage? Well, I'm sorry, but he washed feet. And you think, when I first got it, I thought, John, what are you thinking of? How can this go into community?

And I had to pray a lot. And then I realized that actually there was a lot to it. And I kept thinking, well, surely there's loads of other things that Jesus could have done to show how to serve in a community.

And the mere thought of washing feet to me is quite abhorrent, really. I don't know why, but it is, and I'll tell you later. But he could have actually sent his disciples into the world, really, just to heal all the sickness and diseases and all the troubles that we have.

But the true sickness and disease of humanity is lack of faith, lack of trusting in Jesus. And that's what really needed healing. And so he needed to send out his disciples, not to be in a traveling show of healing and miracles.

He needed to send them out, to go into the community to show people the love of Jesus in a practical way. And he had to demonstrate that himself.

[9 : 14] Now, I used to be doing beauty therapy in Africa. And one of the things that I did in beauty therapy was pedicures. Pedicures are not my favorite thing in the world. I loved everything else to do with beauty therapy, but pedicures were my worst days.

And sometimes I had a whole day of pedicures. And people come to you when they want to pedicure, not with perfect feet. They come to you because they want their feet made perfect. And there was one particular lady that I had that was a regular customer.

Once a month, she came to me with black cracked heels with lots of greeny bits in them. I think she walked in the garden with them. And what grew under her toenails really wasn't worth mentioning to man, but it was really unpleasant.

And she used to come to me and I'd clean her feet. The heels would be smooth when she'd go. Her toenails would be clean. They'd be sparkly, shiny, clipped and tidy. And she'd say, thank you so much.

I came in here thinking that I was walking on rocks and I feel like I'm walking on heaven when I walk out. And it's such a delight. And I thought, that is really lovely. But at the end of a pedicure day, my hands smelled like feet and it wasn't pleasant.

[10 : 22] I have a common dislike about feet. So here we go. Lots of feet in this, by the way. So Jesus washed feet. But let's take a close look of what he really did.

What he really did was he demonstrated that all the disciples were his except one. He demonstrated to them that they needed to serve one another. They need to learn to serve one another in their own community group.

And then they needed to take that serving heart, that servant heart, out into whatever community they lived in. And I love Peter. So I'm going to start with Peter because this room was full of the disciples and Peter was one of them.

And good old Peter did his usual thing and stuck his foot in his mouth. And he said to Jesus, I'm not going to let you clean my feet, in essence. I'm not going to let you clean my feet.

You're my Lord and Master. Why would I let my Lord and Master clean my feet? It's normally the servant does that. You know, Peter got it right and wrong in one mouthful as such.

[11 : 22] He got it right that Jesus was his Lord and Master. Why would he accept his Lord and Master to clean his feet, to serve him? And it feels wrong, doesn't it, to have Jesus serve us?

Because surely, shouldn't we be serving him? Because he has a servant heart. Peter had a servant heart when he asked that question. And Jesus' response was, unless I wash your feet, you will have no part with me.

And I love Peter's response. He said, go for it. Do my head and my hands as well. And it was almost like he dived in. You know, here I am. And I think that constituted for a bath for him. I'm not sure why, but Jesus actually said, you've had a bath already.

You're clean. You're mine. All I need you to do is have your feet washed. And who needs a parable when you've got a Peter? Because this was a clear message to you and I that Peter was totally in the right place by being a servant to his Lord.

And if we've had, if we've given our life to Jesus, then we've had a bath already. We're clean. Because when we gave our life to Jesus, he cleansed our sins. We've repented of them.

[12 : 34] And he cleansed us of them. But we keep walking into a bit of sin now and again, don't we? So we need to wash our feet. We need to deal with that as such. And later on, I'm going to bring up the Judas in the room because there was a Judas in the room.

But let's look at the rest of the disciples and their reaction to Jesus washing their feet. Well, actually, they didn't have one. They just accepted it. And I wondered why.

And I thought, well, let me have a look at what happens in that time. And in that time, washing your feet when you came into someone's home was the normal thing. You got dusty, sandy feet. The rest of you was expected to be clean.

So you got your feet washed. Now, that was a normal community habit and long before we had cream carpets and shoes off signs at the front door. But the main thing was that there were servants and it usually was a little servant girl that washed the people's feet before they came into your home.

And if your host washed your feet, that was counted as a special friendship, a special privilege. I did think, did the disciples think of Jesus as their friend?

[13:42] And quite frankly, he is. He is our friend. But he is also our Lord and Master, our Lord and Savior. And I just thought, well, would we expect our Lord and Savior to wash our feet?

Imagine now, Jesus walking in here and we're all sitting with a bowl at our feet and he comes and washes your feet. It would feel kind of weird, wouldn't it? Because he's our Lord and our Savior.

Peter was the one in 12 that thought it was really odd and he questioned it.

The other 11 disciples didn't. And I thought, we know that they didn't understand it because Jesus said, do you understand what I've done for you?

He wouldn't have said that. He wouldn't have raised that question if he didn't know that they didn't understand. He said, you call me teacher and Lord and rightly so, for that is what I am. He was the teacher.

He is their Lord. Now that I, your Lord and teacher, washed your feet, you should also wash on another's feet. Again, this wasn't about washing feet.

[14:44] It was about being servant for the servant king. It was about the disciples serving one another in the community of disciples. And it is about you and I serving one another too.

To fully understand what Jesus taught here, I'm going to read Philippians 2, 1 to 8. It says this, therefore, if you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any common sharing in the spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being in one spirit and of one mind.

Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. This is the bit that I've put on the board from here now. Rather in humility, value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests, but each of you to the interests of the others.

In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus, who, being in the very nature of God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage. Rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness, and being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by being obedient to death, even death on a cross.

[16:11] You see, when Jesus bent to wash the disciples' feet, he placed himself in a position lower than them. This was a place of servitude, of servanthood. He showed them the position in life that they should take.

Romans 12.3 tells us rather soberly that we are not to think highly of ourselves, and the grace that Jesus showed us should be shown to one another. We should not be like the eleven disciples that let Jesus wash their feet without questioning why, without understanding why.

Placing ourselves in a lower position than each other and serving one another is expressing a friendship in response to Jesus' servant-hearted lordship over our lives.

It is the least we can do for Jesus. And Jesus didn't die on the cross just for those twelve disciples. He died on the cross for the whole of humanity.

Verse one says, having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end. This one statement is a lesson in itself to us. We are to love and serve all the one another's in our lives to the end.

[17:22] Not until we don't feel like it anymore. It means then when we've been hurt by someone, or when we don't feel like serving someone, or we feel that they are not worth serving, which should never happen, but you never know.

It means that we shouldn't do that. We should take our eyes off the narrow lens of hurt and self and narrow-mindedness and open it to the wide-angled lens that Jesus had, which was of love, to love everyone.

Even Judas, who must have skipped the bath part, had his feet washed by Jesus, even Judas. And Jesus loved Judas, even though he knew he would fall foul to pride and greed.

Jesus loved him, and he loves all the other one another's that don't love him back. Did you know that? That if you don't love Jesus, it doesn't matter. He still loves you.

That will never stop. Anything you do won't stop him loving you. You can't run away from him. One day, he will meet him face to face. Let's hope we meet him face to face today if you don't know him.

[18:36] You see, having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end. That's everyone. Jesus teaches us that we don't get to choose who we serve in our community.

He calls us to love and serve as he did, even to Judas. Now, we're not going to go and get a bar of soap and a bowl of water and a towel and chuck it over our shoulder and go wash everybody's feet in the community, are we?

We need a practical application for this. And, well, since we're on feet, I thought we might as well serve with beautiful feet. And so I've got this beautiful feet section here where I say beautiful feet pray.

Beautiful feet pray with hearts that want to see family saved, friends saved. I'm going to ask you to do something very brave now. Put your hand up if you know someone that doesn't know the Lord in your life.

Look around you. In this room, there are a load of someones joining you, praying for those that really, we really want them to know the Lord. We want everyone around us, our friends and our family, to know the saving grace that we've received ourselves because it's wonderful, isn't it? [19:50] It's just an absolute joy, so why wouldn't we want to share it? But we pray every day. And we pray for miracles and we're praying for a few at the minute.

We pray for the hearts of everyone that we meet. We pray for things that are in need. We pray for ourselves. It's not a bad thing to pray for yourself.

And if you think that you shouldn't pray to God, it's a bit cheeky because I did at one time. When I first became a Christian, I thought, oh, it's a bit cheeky to ask God for things. I didn't think that he would want to know my problems and deal with my things.

And then someone put me right and said, but he loves you and he cares for you. Why wouldn't you want to bring those things to him? So beautiful feet, pray. Beautiful feet, give words of encouragement.

So words of encouragement can be by anything. Cards, letters, email, all of these wonderful WhatsApp, zoosaps and doodaps and whatever it is that you go on.

[20:50] There's lots of different virtual things that you can put words on. But they must be encouraging. You know, beautiful feet, don't give their opinion, they give their love. So remember that.

Beautiful feet make room in their heart. And oh my goodness, it's a wonderful thing to make room in your heart in your home, in your garage, in your shed, in your great big hanger for people's stuff. You make room in your home for people to come and stay with you. You make room in your home to feed people. people. You make room in your heart to give money to those who do not have any money for food, for bills, for anything.

You make room in your heart to share the word together, to pray together, to live together and to be there when you're needed. You see, I've just described a small snapshot of what happens in this church.

It really does. And I'm not saying, well, pat yourselves on the shoulder because then that can turn into pride. What I am saying is that we're on the right track. We're on the right track.

[21:58] Let's keep our beautiful feet walking for the love that Jesus has shown us. This passage isn't about getting your feet clean.

This passage is about being with Jesus, becoming like Jesus and doing what Jesus did. and doing what Jesus did was this. He served the one another's that lived with him.

He served the one another's that worked with him. He served the one another's that ate with him. He served the one another's that betrayed him. He served everyone.

You see, this group of disciples that were quite disparate in many ways, they were about to be called to do the biggest thing on earth second to Jesus coming down. And that was to go and spread this message that Jesus came to give them.

And Romans 10, 14, 15 tells us why. How then can they call on the one that they have not believed in? And how then can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard?

[23:04] And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? And how can anyone preach unless they're sent? As it is written, how beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news?

Have you ever thought of consecrating your feet to the work of the Lord? I'm serious. Really serious. There's a lot of walking in Jesus' footsteps to be done.

This is a tough job. It's not an easy one. We need good, strong feet to go and do this work. We need good, strong hearts, don't we? Because not everybody wants to hear what God has to say to

them.

And it's simply this, that he loves them. Because today, people don't hear the Lord. And like I've said to you earlier, how many friends and family have we got that don't know the Lord Jesus as their Savior yet?

And yet here we are, loving them for Jesus, day after day, week after week, year after year, decade after decade in some cases, and yet they don't hear.

[24 : 12] And Jesus even had to explain to the disciples why he did the things he did. He said in verse 7, you do not realize now what I'm doing, but later you will understand. You know, it broke my heart when a dear friend of 90 years old, who I went to visit for many, many years, said one day, I wish I could have the faith that you have, but I just don't get it.

I've explained to her so many times that Jesus' love, I explained why I have Jesus in my heart, and I don't know if she gave her life to Christ before she died, because I wasn't there, but I pray she did eventually.

I pray that though she didn't realize at the time, that one day she would have understood. And many a time I said to God, oh, just for a second, I have to say just for a second, I give up, I can't seem to get through, and it breaks my heart.

when I love this person to pieces, and I don't want them to go to hell. And God says to me, Sandy, do not give up.

Don't you know I've got through to you? You heard me, so if you heard me, they can too. So if you're feeling a bit discouraged today, and I get discouraged quite often, don't be.

[25 : 35] Let Jesus, let God talk into your heart, and encourage you to keep going, keep telling people about the love that Jesus has for them, that you can show through you. So here's the final practical application of this, and I finish with this.

This passage shows Jesus teaching his disciples to serve one another and ultimately serve the community by being peas. That's P-E-A-S.

They're going to be prepared, they're going to have an explanation, they're going to have action, and they're going to be servants. So let me just very quickly go through that. In preparation, Jesus knew God and God knew him.

Jesus knows you and you know him. Jesus was God and is God and as God, he knew everything. But when he came to earth, he came in a human form and he had to learn.

And so he read the scriptures and he prayed just like every single other human on the earth has the chance to do. we must read the word so that we know what we are talking about when people ask about the Jesus that lives in us.

[26 : 43] And if Jesus lives in you, they will. Someone one day will ask you, what's different about you? Because you are palpably different from anyone else in the world if you are with Jesus.

So my encouragement is to prepare. Be with Jesus daily. Read the word. Number two is explanation. We must have an explanation. Jesus had to explain what he was doing and why he was doing it to the disciples, yet they spent a lot of time with him.

The one and others we reach out to in our community are looking for an explanation of why we serve Jesus. Why do we come to church on a Sunday morning? It isn't because of anything else but to serve Jesus and to love Jesus and it shouldn't be for anything like that.

Yes, there are add-ons to that. We have a wonderful community. We have the love that we share for one another. We have the group prayer and we can worship together. But we are serving Jesus ultimately.

And many people, every single person will have the deeper questions of why they exist. Why do I exist? What am I doing here? Where am I going to go when I die? That will be on everyone's heart and everyone's mind at least one time in their lives.

[27 : 58] Jesus has all the answers for them. So speak about the Jesus that you know and live for and lead them to him and he will give them their answers. I actually had one of our builders talk, again, I don't know how the conversation came about, but we were ending up talking about the Lord.

And he said, yeah, but I think I need to be a little bit more educated before I make any moves. And I said, that's great. Go and read the Bible. If you want to be educated, read the truth, read the Bible, and I encourage you to start with the Gospels because you'll absolutely be involved with what you read.

I'm going to get him a Bible if he hasn't started reading the one in his home. And then the third section of being a PE is to act.

Wrap a towel around your waist and don't seek the high position than one another. That's what we should do. before Jesus did this, before he knelt down to wash the feet of his disciples, did you notice he removed his outer clothing?

He removed his outer clothing so that you could see him. Do we, do people that we reach out to see us in reality, or do they see a cloak of Christianity?

[29 : 17] Let me expand on that a little bit. To some people, Christians have an air of superiority. Christianity is like a cloak of Christianity around us.

And you know what? If they see that, if they look at us and think we look holier than thou, they won't want to come and approach the Jesus that we serve. We need to be real with everybody that we meet.

So don't take that cloak of Christianity. If you think there is one, take it off. Let them see Christ in you, the reality of who you are.

And finally, let us be servants. You know, Jesus was our servant king. We must be his servants if we are to be effective into bringing souls into his kingdom.

Do what Jesus did for you. Go and love the one another in your life to the very end. Sin had to be dealt with. The world thinks Christianity is obsessed with sin.

[30 : 20] It's not. We're obsessed with love. The love that Jesus showed us and that we want to show everyone else. True? And this was never more evidence than what Jesus did than at this moment.

So go wash some feet. Go show the community the love that Jesus showed you. Amen.