

The King, Washes Feet!

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Date: 05 July 2026

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[0 : 01] John chapter 13, verses 1 to 17. I was tempted to come this morning with a bucket of water and a towel, but I didn't.

! I have done that before. As I was frightened it would be a bit performative, which is not the point really. But it is a wonderful passage, this, of Jesus washing his disciples' feet.

And we're going to read together from verse 1. It was just before the Passover feast. Jesus knew that the time had come for him to leave this world and to go to the Father.

Having loved his own who were in the world, he now showed them the full extent of his love. The evening meal was being served and the devil had already prompted Judas Iscariot, son of Simon, to betray Jesus.

Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under his power and that he'd 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.

[1 : 06] After that he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples' feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around him. He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, Lord, are you going to wash my feet?

Jesus replied, you do not realize now what I am doing, but later you will understand. Nor said Peter, 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. Jesus answered, a person who is at a bath needs only to wash his feet.

His whole body is clean and you are clean, nor 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.

[2 : 25] I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. I tell you the truth. 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. Amen. And the Lord will bless to us the reading of his word. Jesus, the king, washes feet.

John Alberg said Jesus' life as a foot-washing servant would eventually lead to the adoption of humility as a widely admired virtue. And you need to understand that humility was not regarded as a virtue.

It was regarded certainly by the Greeks as a vice. Pride was important. Self-pride. Being confident in yourself. But to take the position of a foot-washer was to take the position of the lowliest of all servants in Israelite culture.

For when they washed people's feet at the start of the Passover meal or even just as a house servant when somebody came to visit for a meal, it was thought to be beneath a dew to wash somebody else's feet.

[3 : 48] And so they would employ Gentile servants if they had them to do this most menial of tasks. Humility was not something that people prized or valued.

And that's a common mistake today, isn't it, in modern society. Assert yourself. Be proud of who you are. Live your own life.

Exert your own identity. Humility. Don't become a doormat for others to walk over. But this is not what the Bible means by humility, the idea of a doormat.

That's not humility in the Bible. As C.S. Lewis said, True humility isn't thinking less of yourself. It's thinking of yourself less. Not thinking less of yourself, but thinking of yourself less.

Humility as modeled by Jesus here is an incredible act of self-sacrificing service. In washing the disciples' feet, he makes a conscious decision to shift the spotlight away from himself and what he was going to go through and to put that spotlight on his disciples who, as always, didn't understand what he was doing and would only understand it later.

[5 : 11] And that is why John calls this an example of the full extent of his love. Not because they understood it, but because given all that he was about to face in this final week, the agonies and the awfulness of the cross, he took time out to serve those who should have been serving him.

And that is an act of great humility. Thinking less of yourself. Thinking more of others. And so we see here in verses 1 to 5, the king who kneels.

Passover feast. So it was an important, one of the three important feasts in the annual Jewish calendar. And here it was, the most important of all, Passover, that reminded them of the time when the Lord passed over their houses in Egypt, that the lintels of their doorposts were dauged with the blood of the lamb's sacrifice.

And this was to be the final Passover that Jesus would celebrate here on earth, when he would then literally become the Passover lamb who would take away the sin of the world.

It says, John says, Jesus knew that the time had come for him to leave this world and go to the Father, having loved his own who were in the world.

[6 : 35] Now he showed them the full extent of his love. Jesus knew, says John, that the time had come.

And just to repeat again, for those who haven't been before or for those of us who are slow in learning, the time has come, or literally the hour has come, refers to the hour and time of his sacrifice.

The main reason why he came to this earth. As John put it, the main reason he descended to earth in order that he might ascend into heaven.

What commentators call the descent-ascent schema of John's gospel. This idea that there is a rhythm and a way that is demonstrable in the life of Jesus.

And all along that way, all of those events in his life were foreordained by God to the precise hour upon which he would die on the day of Passover.

[7 : 43] And Jesus knew what was going to happen. He knew he would go to the cross. He knew he would rise from the dead.

He knew he would ascend into heaven. He knew he would sit at the right hand of the Father. He knew he was returning to God. He must have been happy and yet at the same time terrified.

And both were true. Gethsemane would come before the cross and the agony in which he sweated those drops of blood that poured out of him as he faced the cross.

It was a very real and a very traumatic experience for our Lord Jesus. But he knew that this significant moment was coming.

And at this moment, wouldn't you expect that at such an important moment in the life of Jesus, everybody would serve him. This is like, you're just about to leave.

[8 : 45] Let's have a meal for you. You're just about to go. Let's make sure this is special. One to remember, but not at all.

They were gathered. They were all washed because when you were going for a meal, you had a bath first and then you traveled to the host's house. And when you got to the host's house, all that was needed was for your feet to be washed, which is why Jesus said to Peter later on, if you've already had a bath, you don't need me to bath you again.

People came prepared for their meal. And then they were all looking around. Where is the servant who's going to wash feet? All of the disciples looking around.

Well, maybe I should volunteer. But none of them volunteered. And so Jesus gets up and he wraps himself with a towel and he prepares himself to wash everybody else's feet and they all watch on.

It should have been them, but it was him. And they didn't like it. They thought he's carrying out a terribly menial service.

[9 : 58] This is beneath him. For after all, he is not just at the table with us and he is not just our rabbi and our teacher. He is our Lord. He is our Savior.

And he is the host at the meal. And in Jewish custom, the host would never wash feet. And a rabbi would never wash the feet of his disciples.

So the disciples should have offered themselves. But he, fully aware of what he was doing, fully aware of where he was going, fully aware of what he had to go through, stooped so low to do this task.

Ask. So I find the song that we've just sung really difficult to sing. Like a rose trampled on the ground, you took the fall and thought of me above all.

Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus, who being in very nature God did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness and being found in appearance as a man.

[11:19] He humbled himself and became obedient to death, even death on a cross. Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow in heaven and on earth and under the earth.

And every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father. Nothing was beneath him and nothing should be beneath us if we are willing to serve Jesus.

He takes the place of the suffering servant to fulfill prophecy. Isaiah chapter 53, 4-6, he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, yet we consider him stricken by God, smitten by him, and afflicted.

But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities. The punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed. You see it? When people looked upon him at the cross, unlike the sort of, the movies where you get all of these very sympathetic people around, the majority of the people scolded and mocked him.

Such was the humiliation of one who would be nailed naked on a cross and receive a curse, for cursed is anyone who hangs on a tree.

[12:43] And people mocked him and spat at him, even those who were by his side being crucified. They did that for a time. By his wounds we are healed.

He who would humiliate himself to wash feet, he who would humiliate himself to die a cursed death on a cross, deserves my worship, deserves my life, my all.

By my righteous act, my servant shall justify many, says Isaiah, because he bears their iniquities away.

What a servant. And in this act, Jesus teaches us what it is to serve. And it's amazing to see the one who created the universe, the one who created man from the dust of the ground, wiping the dust off their feet.

Above all powers, above all kings, above all nature and all created things, above all wisdom and all the ways of man, you were here before the world began.

[14:04] Above all kingdoms, above all thrones, above all wonders the world has ever known, above all wealth and treasures of the earth, there's no way to measure what you're worth.

Crucified. Lay it behind a stone. you live to die. Rejected and alone, like a rose, trampled on the ground, you took the fall and thought of me above all.

reminds me of Sheila on Wednesday at Whitby Court.

We were going around introducing the various members of the team and came to Nicholas.

Nicholas said, I'm Nicholas and I love Jesus and Sheila will be replied, what is there not to love?

Bless her heart. What is there not to love? The king who kneels and the disciple who is humbled.

Next we see the servant who objects.

[15:32] He came to Simon Peter verse 6. He came to Simon Peter who said to him, Lord, are you going to wash my feet? Jesus replied, you do not realize now what I am doing but later you will understand.

No, said Peter, 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 as well.

Jesus answered, a person who is at a bath needs only to wash his feet. His whole body is clean and you are clean. No, not every one of you for he knew was going to betray him and that was why he said not everyone was clean.

This great act of humility humility is rejected by Peter at first. Never. You are never going to do that. I am not going to let you do that.

That is beneath you. I would feel humiliated if you did that and you would humiliate yourself. You must never do this. Now the disciples, Luke tells us, at the start of the Passover meal were arguing among themselves.

[16:45] It is like Christmas, you know, when you bring the family around and you are going to have the best day and then everybody falls out. And so here they are arguing. Guess what they are arguing about?

Who is the greatest? Who is going to be the greatest in the kingdom of heaven? It is going to be me, Peter was to thought. I am going to be in charge. You are all going to follow me. I am going to lead the attack when Jesus is out of the way.

And then Jesus does this. Who is the greatest? I am too important to wash dishes, to Hoover floors, to serve others.

Sometimes we have that attitude. I doubt Donald Trump set up the stage yesterday for 250 years of American history. I am. I doubt the queen, bless her heart, or the king as he currently is, spends a lot of time preparing the mansion rooms for the banquets, for great dignitaries.

But here is Jesus, not ashamed to do the little thing, the unimportant, even the inappropriate thing.

[18:04] So why, why then does Peter react in this way? Well, arguably out of respect for Jesus, out of respect for his position and his authority.

Lord, you are a rabbi. I am a disciple. You are my lord and savior. I am but a servant. Exactly, Peter. So why aren't you washing your feet?

And why not the rest of you? You are interested in being the greatest. But to be great in the kingdom of God is to humble yourself and become nothing. To be great in the kingdom of God is not to assert your rights, but to say, I am a slave of Jesus.

I give him my rights to my life, to my way, to my future. I give him the right to own and to be in charge of my own life.

I don't understand what that will involve necessarily. And Jesus says to Peter, you do not realize now what I am doing, but later you will understand.

[19:22] I love this. Peter, you've just spoken before you understood. It's your habit, I know. But one day you will look back on this and you will think, I'm ashamed of myself for saying that.

I realize now that I have to give my life away. And at the end of the gospel, bless him, Peter says, understandably, about John, he says, what's going to happen with him, Jesus?

Jesus, and Jesus says, what business is that of yours? You serve me. One day, he says, they're going to come and take you away. They're going to lead you to a place that you do not want to go. He's going to be taken against his will to a place of execution and tradition has it that he was crucified like his Savior. That was the cost of following Jesus.

Jesus. Jesus. to suffer the same indignity that Jesus himself suffered and not deserved but as a willing servant of Jesus.

[20:30] But Peter had finite perspective, limited understanding like we all do. We all never really see a fragment of our lives. Our understanding is always darkened and dim.

Why do bad things happen to good people? Why does trial happen to God's servants? Why do you go through such times of testing? Why, why, why, why, why?

You don't understand. But one day you will. One day you will. Now you see in a glass darkly. Then you shall see face to face.

Now you only know in part. Then you shall fully know and in heaven we'll be able to say, Lord, I didn't understand it. I didn't understand why I had to go through that. Now I see.

For you do all things well. My thoughts are not your thoughts, says the Lord. Neither are my ways your ways, said the Lord. My thoughts and my ways are higher than heaven.

[21:29] Enough for you to understand. Accept it, Peter. Accept it. I wouldn't ask to do something and I wouldn't do it to you unless it was needed.

Unless I wash you, you have no part with me. Then everything, Lord. If I've got to be washed, if you've got to wash my feet, then I'm all in now, Lord.

Baptize me completely. I'll have it all. I'll even go in the sea at Whitby. Just be grateful you're not going in the sea at Redcar.

Apparently, that's polluted. I'm not being mean to Redcar. I was just told that last night when I was at the cinema. Toy Story 5. Very good film.

I digress. But do you see the arrogance of Peter? You'll never do that.

[22 : 32] But then you see his humility in everything, Lord. Once we begin to understand, once we're willing to surrender to Jesus, Lord, everything, even if it involves suffering, everything, even if it involves not understanding your ways, even if it means that sometimes I feel that you've abandoned me.

I'm all in Jesus and there's no going back. Jesus said to Peter, well, a person who's had a bath needs only to wash his feet.

His whole body is clean, a reminder to us that they were made clean. Jesus said, the word that is in you has made you clean, John chapter 15 and verse 3. And when the blood of Jesus, God's Son, cleanses us from every sin, we don't need to be converted again when we sin.

If anyone sins, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ, the righteous. He is the one who sacrificed for our sins, but not just for our sins, but for the sins of the whole world.

My children, I write to you that you will not sin, but if you do sin, you have an advocate with the Father. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us and forgive us for all unrighteousness.

[23 : 55] Come on. we need to wash our feet. We should let Jesus always, always wash our feet.

You are clean. You are free. You are free. For He knew who was going to betray Him.

There was a Judas there. and He washed His feet. There was a Judas there and He washed His feet.

Take that in. And then think of somebody who hurt you. Think of somebody who betrayed you.

Think of somebody who's very, the very thought of them, you would be naturally inclined to loathe and if you had to come into their presence, they would make you physically sick.

If I had to wash that person's feet, I couldn't do it. Not in my own strength. But here is love.

[25 : 11] There was Judas. And in this wonderful act, this final act of mercy in motion, he reached out and he took his feet, the feet of his betrayer, into his hands and he washed them.

But John tragically tells us that Judas went out and it was night because such was the darkness of his heart.

And if you want to follow Jesus, he says, you go and do the same. Be willing to wash the feet of the betrayer. Be willing to wash the feet of those who hurt you, who those who wound you, who those who savagely misuse you.

Be willing. I have set you an example for you to follow. Corrie Ten Boom and her sister's guard all over again.

And so there is this example to follow. 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?

[26 : 34] He asked them, you call me teacher and Lord and rightly so, for that is who I am. You must not think that because I wash feet that I am not your Lord.

And because I am willing to associate with those who the world will not associate with, and because I am willing even to wash the feet of my betrayer, that I am not a good teacher. in fact, that is what makes me your Lord and teacher.

That I am willing to go so much further than any other human that you know, and I am willing to forgive the unforgivable and to receive those the world would reject.

I am willing to do that which the world would call unjust and undeserving in order that people might be saved and washed and cleansed by the blood of Jesus.

And I want you to follow my example. I want humility to be the pattern of your lives. I want you to be friends of sinners. I want you to mix with the undeserving.

[27 : 48] I want you to love the unlovely. I want you to be there for them and be there for them again and again and again and no matter what they do to you, I want you to serve them.

For that is what it is to be like Jesus and to do what Jesus does. never, never seek to be the most important.

Seek to be the most willing to serve. So should we be washing people's feet? Well, if you want to, you can.

My feet are ready. I have had a shower this morning, so they won't be too smelly. but it's not a sacrament.

It's not like baptism and the Lord's Supper. The church never taught that you should do it routinely as a weekly ritual or an established practice and actually probably it's not appropriate to this culture.

[28 : 58] We don't have lots of sand and dust. But there will be things that are appropriate to our culture that we can serve people with. Give them a meal when they can't afford to pay.

Provide some clothing and some footwear when they can't afford their own. Find other ways to help those who are deeply hurt or terribly impoverished in some way.

Always, always be on the lookout for those who are in need, whom you can help, who otherwise the world despise us. So what does it mean to wash feet today?

Next slide. It means that we learn to serve without being asked. Jesus washed the feet of his disciples, none of them asked him to do it, some of them didn't want him to do it, but he did it anyway.

Serve those who may betray or disappoint you. Jesus washed Judas' feet. Instead of hating on those who've hurt you, ask God to give you the grace to forgive them, and then to wash their feet.

[30 : 15] Serve in ways that cost you something, time or comfort or reputation. Serve humbly without the need for recognition, and serve because Christ calls you to.

Whatever you do, in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him. Jesus kneels before his subjects, a king who kneels so that we can stand. He serves so we can be saved. He washes so we can walk clean. He models humility so we can embody his love in the world.

We are not called to admire Jesus, but to imitate him. We don't just preach about his servanthood, we practice it.

We don't just know about his example, we live it. If you know these things, happy are you if you do it.

[31 : 26] so there's my challenge as the music group come back today. My name is Nicholas and I love Jesus.

Well, who wouldn't? What is there not to love? well, there's a question for your heart. When you think of him despised, rejected, alone, like that rose trampled on the ground, he took the fall and thought of me above all.

Let's sing this next song as we make our response to Jesus.