

John 13:1-17

## The Way Jesus Said Goodbye

I love the way that Jesus begins to say farewell. Here we are at Maundy Thursday and we enter that Time in Holy Week where Jesus is in the Upper Room behind closed doors with his disciples telling them goodbye. All that had occurred in their lives; here is Nathaniel sitting around the table, he remembers when Jesus saw him under the fig tree. Here is Andrew who was the first to tell Peter about Jesus. Here is James sitting next to John, who is sitting next to Jesus, they remember the day that Jesus called them to be fishers of men. Here is Matthew who was called away from collecting taxes. And there is Judas, the one who will betray Jesus, reclining at the table.

For the past three years these 12 men have been walking with Jesus. They have seen the eyes of the blind opened; have seen the dead raised; have seen crowds of thousands fed miraculously; have seen the dead raised. Now they are sitting behind closed doors as Jesus prepares them for what he had been preparing the world since the beginning - his death.

This passage, the farewell discourse, is one of my most precious passages of Scripture. I am guessing that you love it too. It is in the Farewell Discourse that Jesus says,

*“Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me. In my Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, 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 will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also. And you know the way to where I am going.” Thomas said to him, “Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?” Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. (John 14:1-6, ESV).*

I figured you liked it. But I want us to pay special attention tonight to the way that he begins saying his goodbye. He begins saying goodbye the same way that he came, the same way that will send him to the Cross. He begins to say goodbye by taking a towel, wrapping it around his waist, and washing feet.

Read text

Because Jesus loves us, he takes every opportunity to teach us how he loves us. And as he wants us who know his love to love in the way that he loves. I want to make just three quick observations tonight before we engage in a service of foot-washing. I want us to think about why Jesus decides to begin to say goodbye with taking a towel and washing feet. What does this tell us about our Lord?

## 1. God's Love for Us Knows No Boundaries

What does Jesus do when he knows that *the Father had given all things into his hands* and that *he had come from God and was going back to God*? He took a towel and washes feet. This is the scandal of the gospel, a part that most men can't get around. This is amazing love on display. This is love like no other love. This is the God of the ages, the one to whom every knee will bow, bowing down to dip his hand in a basin to wash the feet of filthy sinners, even one who would later defy his love and betray him.

Foot washing was an act that was so detestable that even Jewish slaves were not allowed to wash feet. But washing feet, as detestable as it might be, was nothing compared to what the Lord had already done in the incarnation or would do on the cross. His entire life is a life on display of his limitless love for you and me. He was willing to do whatever it took to save you and me and through saving us he served us in the greatest way imaginable - the self-giving of his life for us.

No wonder when men reflect on his love they write

I stand amazed in the presence of Jesus the Nazarene, and wonder how he could love me, a sinner condemned, unclean.

Indeed, Amazing Love, how can it be, that thou my God shouldst die for me.

As S.M. Lockridge famously said, "no means of measure can define his limitless love." And he came to seek and save you. His boundless love for you and me, when all things were given into his hand caused him to embrace the cross and despise the shame. He came to give us life and the way he gave us life was by self-sacrificing his so that he could serve us in the most ultimate way.

His love knows no boundaries

## 2. Jesus Has Come to Wash Away Our Sins

Jesus is washing feet as a symbol of what he will accomplish on the Cross later. What he will accomplish later is something like the world had never experienced nor will ever experience again. On the Cross, Jesus would deal with the sin of the world for forever. On the Cross, Jesus would take my sin and your sin and bury it in the grave of God's forgetfulness.

But old Peter is confused. Peter's confusion is the confusion of so many today. The once-for-all washing was coming, this washing was just a symbol of THE washing. The ultimate washing would come through the Cross.

I've always found it interesting that when the soldier pierced the side of Jesus blood and water poured out. I know all the physiological reasons that we have come up with about the pericardium sack of the heart and all the rest. But, maybe, just maybe, water and blood flowed out to show us that the Cross is the way that we are washed and the way that we remain unstained from the world. As long as we are in the world we have the joyous duty of walking with the Lord. The way that we walk with the Lord is to keep ourselves unstained from the word. From the same side came both the washing power and the cleansing power.

Even we who have been cleansed need washing. Look at what Jesus says, *The one who has bathed does not need to wash, except for his feet, but is completely clean. And you are clean, but not every one of you.* (John 13:10ESV) Jesus says that people who have been washed by the once-for-all death of Jesus need daily cleansing. Listen to 1 John.

*This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin. If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.* (1 John 1:5-10, ESV)

Now that we are clean, we have the responsibility to stay clean. Confession is the way that we maintain fellowship with God and each other. Which leads us to our 3rd and final point this evening. Look at verses 12-17:

### **3. Jesus Has Come To Model Christian Conduct**

Listen, the only reason we have to wash one another's feet is because he has washed us. He has forgiven us, cleansed us, and made us his very own. As the Father sent Him so he sends us. We can't just wash each other's feet for the fun of it, we are enabled to wash each other's feet because we have seen and believed in this love that bent so low to make a wretch his treasure.

Washing feet is a symbol. Washing feet is about more than removal of external dirt. Most of you tonight don't need your feet physically washed, but you need to have a spirit of servanthood, a spirit of forgiveness, a spirit of unity and humility. Christ commands us:

*Let your manner of life be worth of the gospel of Christ...So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. (Philippians 1:26; 2:1-8, ESV)*

So, you are invited tonight to symbolically do what Jesus has called us to do. We are going to engage in a foot washing ceremony. When you wash the feet of another you are declaring:

- 1 - God Loves You
- 2 - I Love You
- 3 - I want you to know God's love