
Day 1

Learn: Prayerfully read John 13.1-9. This was the evening meal [13.30], the Passover feast. It was Thursday evening; Jesus had less than one day left to live. Jesus stripped to his loincloth like a menial slave and then covered himself with a towel around his waist; the towel would have been long enough to wipe the feet of the disciples. The disciples' astonishment would grow as Jesus began to wash their feet. For a special meal like this, they would all recline around a U-shaped table, leaning on an elbow with their feet extended away from the table. Jesus began to go around, pouring water over their feet and into a catch basin, then toweling their feet dry. In the Old Testament, most examples of foot washing show the host providing the water, but the guests washing their own feet [Genesis 18.4; 19.2; 24.32; 43.24; Judges 19.21]. This washing was necessary because people walked on dusty streets in open sandals. In Jesus' day, if the host owned non-Jewish slaves, they would wash the feet of the guests, but never would a respectable Jew wash another's feet in this way. This would have shocked the sensibilities of the disciples.

While the others apparently were stupefied into silence, Peter was spurred to objection. The word order in the Greek text of 13.6 suggests Peter's emphasis on "you" and "my": "Lord, are *you* washing *my* feet?" In 13.8, Peter is even more emphatic: "You *certainly will not ever* wash my feet!" Peter might not have understood fully Jesus' reply, but he did know he wanted a share with Christ [in that day the terminology could refer to an inheritance or end-times blessings], so he exuberantly responded in 13.9. What did Jesus tell Peter? In 13.8, we come to understand the foot washing as a memorable symbol of the crucifixion: by his sacrifice, Jesus is going to cleanse them spiritually [they will be *justified* before God the Father, meaning declared righteous in his sight]. Thus they will have a share or place with him in God's household [14.1-3], representing both an inheritance and an end-times blessing: eternal life with Christ. What Jesus told Peter in 13.7 was that they would not in that moment understand the significance of the foot washing or the crucifixion it represented, but when it was all over and Jesus had been resurrected and ascended to Heaven, then they would learn.

Reflect: This was the Passover feast, and Jesus knew he was about to "pass over" from earth to Heaven [13.1 in the Greek text], by becoming the sacrificial Passover lamb [see 1.29, 36]. What do Jesus' words in 13.8 mean for us today? What is Jesus offering us today [see 5.24]? What do we have to do?

Day 2

Learn: Prayerfully read John 13.4-12. As we noted yesterday, the physical cleansing of foot washing symbolized what Jesus would do for the disciples in his death on the cross: he would provide spiritual cleansing through his own humility and sacrifice. This spiritual cleansing was permanent: when someone comes to faith in Christ, s/he is trusting in Christ to pay the penalty for his/her sin, and in that moment is forgiven and justified permanently.

There are two ways of interpreting Jesus' response to Peter in 13.10. One assumes Jesus is taking advantage of the interaction with Peter to teach a second point. In physical terms, the one who was clean only needed to wash the dust off his feet, not take another bath. In spiritual terms, once a person had accepted the cleansing that Christ offers in salvation, s/he did not need to do so again, but still there would be an ongoing need to clean off the "dirt" that gathers as we walk through life. We all commit sins subsequent to receiving salvation, and in this sense we still need to turn to Jesus for cleansing [see 1 John 1.8-10, written by the same apostolic author]. The other interpretation sticks with the symbolism discussed earlier. As the disciples were clean physically but still needed Jesus to wash their feet to be ready for supper, so they were clean spiritually through their faith, but still needed to accept what Jesus would offer in his death for them on the cross in order to receive the blessings of God in salvation. As Peter needed to accept that his master and teacher Jesus would humble himself to act like a menial slave to serve him in foot washing, they all needed to accept that their master and teacher Jesus would humble himself to die a shameful death on the cross to serve them in the crucifixion.

Reflect: What is our need for confession according to 1 John? How could it relate to what Jesus said here? How strange is it to think that God's plan for salvation involves the divine Son of God dying on a cross to pay our penalty? Is it easier to believe/explain that considering even coming as a man was an act of humility and sacrifice for him?

Day 3

Learn: Prayerfully read John 13.12-17. As their teacher and master, Jesus assumed the dress of a menial slave and then served them like such a slave. Similarly, as the almighty Son of God, Jesus had come to die a shameful death to serve them [and us]. Do we think we are better than Jesus? Yet he, as our master and teacher, and as the one who sends us out to represent him to the world, served us sacrificially and lovingly. To make this point emphatic to those at the table, Jesus engaged in a little word-play: the term translated as “messenger” in 13.16 in most English Bibles is actually “apostle” in Greek [which means “messenger” or “envoy”]: “...nor is an apostle greater than the one who sent him.” If Jesus as master and sender is willing to wash their feet and die for them, then they should be willing to do these things for one another.

There are two thoughts here. First, though they were shocked that Jesus the Messiah would serve them by washing their feet like a menial slave, he says they should be willing to do the same – to sacrificially and humbly serve – for each other. Second, as the foot washing was symbolic of the sacrificial death Jesus would offer for them [to cleanse them spiritually], they should be willing to die for each other and for him [see 15.13]. Both lines of thought indicate the church is to be characterized by loving one another just as Christ loved them [13.34-35].

Reflect: Read 1 Samuel 25.41 and see how Abigail responds just after being told she will become wife to David. What is Jesus’ example for us in this passage? What does this mean you should do? Jesus condemned those who heard his words but failed to keep them [12.47-48]; in 13.17, he emphasized this again. Don’t just say, “Amen, we agree,” go live out what you believe! How can you do this better?

Day 4

Learn: Prayerfully read John 13.1-17. 13.2-4 are one long sentence in Greek, and sometimes the relationships are lost in English translations that try to break this into multiple sentences for readability. *Because* Judas was ready to betray Jesus, *because* Jesus knew he now was going back to God the Father in Heaven [his hour had come], *because* he knew he had come from God the Father, and *because* he knew God the Father had given all things to him [symbolizing position, authority]... *because* of knowing all this, what did Jesus do? confront Judas? confound the evil attack? no, he chose to wash feet. This knowledge would have validated to Jesus himself that he was the Son of God, God the Father’s chosen Davidic King, the Messiah-savior promised in scripture; he would know he was the most powerful and entitled entity in the entire universe! And he would know he was in his last day of life. Because he knew all that, he chose to wash feet. What does that suggest to you about the character of Jesus? This passage shows *how* Jesus loved them to the end as it says in 13.1: he sacrificially served them, he taught them, and [most importantly] he died for them.

Reflect: If for Jesus the knowledge of power, authority, and entitlement led him to choose to serve, how should we react to our position in Christ as adopted children of God the Father, saved people of Christ, Spirit filled people of the church? If our master and teacher chose to be humble and to serve, how should we who owe him everything choose to live? How could you exemplify this better?

Day 5

Learn: Prayerfully read John 13.2. Judas had a sinful heart [12.6] and was willfully pursuing sin even while serving as one of Jesus’ apostles. He chose a life of sin and he chose to betray Jesus for money [Luke 22.4-5]. At the same time, this betrayal was a satanic plot. 13.27 shows Satan spurring Judas to action, and 13.2 shows the seed had already been planted. We are responsible for our sins, but we should not forget that evil is at work around us and sometimes will try to work in us and through us. Demons are fallen angels, serving their leader, Satan. We have to protect against their influence on our thoughts and we have to realize that we are in the middle of a spiritual war they are waging against Christ and his truth. Jesus washed the feet of Judas, knowing Judas was going to betray him. This reveals a lot about Jesus and the divine view of love and humility; it also reveals that participation in spiritual rites is not beneficial in themselves; what they symbolize [receiving the washing of the Lamb] is what saves.

Reflect: Based on the actions of Jesus, how should we react to people trying to hurt us? If demonic attack is real, what does that imply for how much you depend on God? for your prayer life? How will you adjust to this reality? How should this affect how you approach spiritual ritual, like singing in church or taking the Lord’s Supper?