

Jesus Washes the Disciples Feet

John 13:1-20

April 16, 2023

1. Jesus washes His disciples' feet: Jesus' final instructions begin with an illustration (1-5).
 - a. The setting of the illustration (1-3)
 - i. The timing of this illustration was before Passover – “Now before the feast of the Passover” (1a).
 - ii. Jesus' hour had come – “when Jesus knew that his hour was come that he should depart out of this world unto the Father” (1b)
 - iii. This illustration would demonstrate His love for His disciples, and God's love for the world – “having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end” (1c).
 1. Jesus loved His own, even when they didn't receive Him (cf. 1:11).
 2. Jesus would display that love to the very end, climaxing in His sacrificial death on the cross.
 - iv. The illustration occurs at the conclusion of a supper meal that Jesus shared with His disciples – “And supper being ended” (2a).
 1. Placing the foot washing after the meal breaks the usual order for such a task and highlights its importance.
 2. The illustration is carried out in the presence of the devil-possessed Judas Iscariot – “the devil having now put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray him” (2b).
 - a. Jesus had already indicated that one of His disciples was a devil (cf. 6:70).
 - b. This is now the first time that we learn the identity of that disciple.
 - c. This underscores the condescension of Jesus, not only that He would wash His disciples' feet, but that He would also wash the feet of His betrayer.
 - v. Jesus initiates this illustration with full assurance of His power over all things – “Jesus knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he was come from God, and went to God” (3).
 1. Jesus had received authority over all things from God the Father.
 2. Jesus was exercising His divine authority and purpose.
 - b. The Presentation of the Illustration (4-5)
 - i. He rises up from the table (4a).
 - ii. He lays aside his outer garments and puts on the garments of a servant (4b).
 1. Philippians 2:5-8 “Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.”
 - iii. He then pours water into a basin and washes and dries His disciples' feet (5)
 1. Jesus' act pictures the radical nature of the Gospel.
 2. Foot washing was even demeaning for servants; it was considered the work of slaves.
 3. Jesus was using this very jarring illustration to prepare them for the ultimate paradox of the cross.
 4. This illustration was also preparing the disciples for the humbling life in the New Covenant.
2. Peter Argues with Jesus: Peter's response pictures the human response to the Grace of God (6-11).
 - a. Peter's refusal of the grace of God (6-8)
 - i. When Jesus makes His way to Peter, he responds emphatically, “Lord, do YOU wash MY feet?” (6).
 - ii. Peter's response is the natural fleshly response to the grace of God; to receive the grace of God seems to humiliating to receive; we don't understand it, nor do we see our need for it.
 - iii. Jesus responds to Peter with emphatic pronouns, “What I do YOU know not now, but will know later” (7). This sums up the purpose of this illustration and farewell discourse, the revelation of the Son of God and our relationship to Him.
 - iv. Peter intensifies his refusal with an oath, “You shall not wash my feet in all eternity!” (8a).
 - v. Jesus responds that without the washing, there can be no relationship with Him (8b).
 - b. Peter's misunderstanding of the grace of God (9-11)
 - i. Peter tries to modify Jesus' washing as if it was insufficient, just as we are prone to view God's grace as insufficient to cleanse us of our sins (9).
 - ii. Jesus clarifies the nature of this cleansing (10-11).
 1. The cleansing that Jesus offers is for those who have already been bathed, signifying that this washing was for those who already have a relationship with Him.

- a. Two words for wash are used here, *leloumenos* meaning “bathe,” and *nipsosthai* meaning “wash”.
 - b. Jesus is using two different words to emphasize the differences between the cleansings. To be bathed is to be immersed into relationship with Christ (salvation); to be washed is to be cleansed on an ongoing basis (sanctification).
 2. Jesus then states that the disciples are clean, except one, Judas Iscariot (cf. 13:2).
 - a. Jesus states that Peter is “clean every whit” or “completely clean” before washing Peter’s feet; Jesus’ future atonement for sin has already been applied to Peter, because Peter has become a disciple.
 - b. Since Jesus says that one of them wasn’t clean, we know that Judas was a false disciple; he followed Jesus without believing in Jesus as the Son of God; since Judas didn’t believe in Jesus, he didn’t have the cleansing that belongs to a child of God.
3. Jesus explains the meaning of His foot washing: the disciple is not greater than his Master (12-20).
 - a. After returning to the table, Jesus exposes their lack of understanding with a question (12).
 - b. Jesus reminds His disciple who He is, their Lord and Master (13).
 - c. Jesus now expands upon the meaning of the foot washing (14-15).
 - i. If our Lord and Master has ministered to us, we ought to minister to one another (14).
 - ii. Jesus’ washing of His disciples’ feet was to be an example of how disciples should serve one another (15).
 - d. Jesus emphatically reminds us of our place as His servants and His messengers (16).
 - i. Truly, truly, the servant is not greater than his lord, nor are we disciples greater than our Lord (16a).
 - ii. Truly, truly, the messenger is not greater than the one Who sent him, nor are the messengers of Christ greater than One Who sent us (cf. 20:21).
 - e. Jesus promises that those who understand and follow His example are blessed (17).
 - i. We must understand the meaning of this teaching to imitate it.
 - ii. But we are not blessed until we understand and do it.
 - iii. The blessing is in the doing; you do not have to wait for blessing; the blessing is the doing with understanding.
 - f. Jesus makes it clear that following His example does not save the soul or make someone a disciple; instead it is by faith that we become a disciple (18-19).
 - i. Judas was following Jesus’ example without a saving knowledge of the One He followed (18).
 1. Judas Iscariot was chosen to be one of the 12 disciples, but simply following Jesus did not save him (18a; cf. Psalm 41:9).
 2. Judas Iscariot was following Jesus for selfish reasons which ultimately led to his betrayal of Jesus (18b).
 3. Many people today believe that by doing good works as Jesus did, they will impress God and others, when in reality, they are false disciples, believing themselves to be their own saviors.
 - ii. Jesus prophesies Judas’s betrayal so that that His true disciples’ faith would deepen (19).
 1. The 11 disciples already believed in Jesus as their Savior, because they were already made clean (cf. 10).
 2. The purpose of this prophecy was to deepen their understanding of Who He is and to deepen their faith in Him.
 - g. Jesus concludes His explanation by making this model the pattern for Christian ministry (20).
 - i. Just as Jesus is the agent of God, disciples are the agents of Jesus.
 - ii. Those who receive the ministry of a disciple of Jesus are being ministered to by God.
 - iii. Serving and being served requires humility, but it is the only path to Christlikeness.

Conclusion:

1. Have you been bathed in the righteousness of Christ? Have you been declared righteous?
2. Are you applying that cleansing through daily, moment by moment confession of sin?
3. Are you choosing the life of blessing by serving those around you?