

Title: Christ our Example
Text: John 13: 1-20
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John 13: 1: Now before the feast of the passover, when Jesus knew that his hour was come that he should depart out of this world unto the Father, having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end. **2:** And supper being ended, the devil having now put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray him; **3:** Jesus knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he was come from God, and went to God; **4:** He riseth from supper, and laid aside his garments; and took a towel, and girded himself. **5:** After that he poureth water into a bason, and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe *them* with the towel wherewith he was girded. **6:** Then cometh he to Simon Peter: and Peter saith unto him, Lord, dost thou wash my feet? **7:** Jesus answered and said unto him, What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter. **8:** Peter saith unto him, Thou shalt never wash my feet. Jesus answered him, If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me. **9:** Simon Peter saith unto him, Lord, not my feet only, but also *my* hands and *my* head. **10:** Jesus saith to him, He that is washed needeth not save to wash *his* feet, but is clean every whit: and ye are clean, but not all. **11:** For he knew who should betray him; therefore said he, Ye are not all clean. **12:** So after he had washed their feet, and had taken his garments, and was set down again, he said unto them, Know ye what I have done to you? **13:** Ye call me Master and Lord: and ye say well; for *so* I am. **14:** If I then, *your* Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another's feet. **15:** For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you. **16:** Verily, verily, I say unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord; neither he that is sent greater than he that sent him. **17:** If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them. **18:** I speak not of you all: I know whom I have chosen: but that the scripture may be fulfilled, He that eateth bread with me hath lifted up his heel against me. **19:** Now I tell you before it come, that, when it is come to pass, ye may believe that I am *he*. **20:** Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that receiveth whomsoever I send receiveth me; and he that receiveth me receiveth him that sent me." (Joh 13:18-20)

Every believer—chosen, redeemed and regenerated by the grace of God—wants to do the will of God. Our desire is to please God and honor God, to see Christ receive all the glory, to love and help our brethren and to see needy sinners brought to faith in Christ.

Every believer has a commandment from God by which we are to live. The apostle John wrote, "And this is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment." (1 Jn 1: 3)

Believers are not under the law of Moses. But we are not without the law of Christ. "Faith which worketh by love" is the rule of the believer's life. "For the love of Christ constraineth us." So where does the believer look, to be taught the example, the pattern, we are to live by? We look to Christ alone! Our Redeemer said, in verse 15, "*I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you.*" The apostle Peter reaffirms our Savior's words, writing, our Savior, "*suffered for us, leaving us an example, that we should follow in his steps*" (1 Peter 2:21). We learn everything we need to know by looking to Christ and we are taught effectually in our hearts by Christ.

Here is what we see in John 13. In love for God and his brethren, Christ lowered himself to the very lowest position, and served his people, washing each and every one of God's elect from our sins. So then we ought to love one another by lowering ourselves to the very lowest position and by serving one another.

LOVE UNQUENCHABLE

Christ let nothing stop him from loving those the Father gave him. By that, our Redeemer teaches us to let nothing stop us from loving one another. We see Christ's unquenchable love beginning in verse 1, "*Now before the feast of the passover, when Jesus knew that his hour was come that he should depart out of this world unto the Father, having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end.*" (Jn 13: 1)

Oh, how much must have been on our Savior's mind at this time! "*Before the feast of the Passover*" tells us this was the night before Christ was to die as the true Passover Lamb. This happened on the eve before our Lord's death.

This coming Sunday is the day the world regards as Easter. If it were truly the morning of our Lord's resurrection then this Thursday night would be the night the things in our text transpired.

Notice, Christ's heart was upon the work of his Father, "*When Jesus knew that his hour was come that he should depart out of this world unto the Father.*" He knew. Christ knew the hour for which the world was made had come. He knew God's law must be honored and that he alone would and could accomplish it. Christ knew God's justice must be satisfied and he alone would and could satisfy it. He knew God's elect must be reconciled and he alone would and could reconcile them. Our Savior knew God's elect must be made the righteousness of God in him and he alone would and could accomplish the work.

Also, the cruel cross was before our Savior with all its horrors and shame. He knew he would bear the sins of God's elect in his own body on the tree. Christ knew he would bear the just fire of God's wrath, being forsaken of God his Father. He knew he would lay down his life and have his body laid in a tomb.

Further, as proof of his victory, the joy of returning to the Father was before Him. Oh, what joy was set before him! The joy of being with the Father and having all his people raised in him to God's right hand in glory.

Yet, at the same time, as his heart is set on his Father's work, his heart is set on those he loved, "*when Jesus knew that his hour was come that he should depart out of this world unto the Father, having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end.*" (Jn 13: 1)

Brethren, when we have a fearful and important task before us, we have a tendency to become very much self-absorbed. Or, if we have some great joy before us, we tend to do the same. Either way, our love for one another tends to fade into the background. But with our great Redeemer, not the terror of the cross, not the weighty responsibility, nor the joy and rest of glory could turn Christ from loving and caring for his own in the world.

LOVE TO THE END

Brethren, you do know that "*his own*" are not just those at the table that night, but all God's people, even us here tonight? We are his own—Christ's very own by God the Father's electing grace, by Christ's own redeeming purchase and by God the Holy Spirit's regenerating grace. Christ loves his own! And Christ loves us to the end.

Not only unto the end of time but to the end of our greatest need of his grace. Our omniscient Savior knew his apostles would argue over who should be the greatest, exalting themselves over Christ, yet he loved them to the end of their need. He knew Philip would act like he never knew him yet he loved him to the end of that need. He knew three of them would sleep while He prayed and agonized in the Garden, yet he loved them to the end of that need. He knew Peter would deny him, Thomas would doubt Him and all would forsake him, yet he loved them to the end of their need.

Believer, he knows this and more about every chosen, redeemed, child here now. Yet he loves us to the end: unto the end of our miserable failures, unto the end of our unworthiness, unto the deepest end of our deepest need. He shall continue loving us to the end of time till we are with him in glory forevermore and he will not lose one! Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, and to-day, and forever. There is no shadow of turning with him. He loves his own with an everlasting love. (Jn 10: 28-29; Heb 13: 8; Ja 1: 17; Jer 31: 13)

Here is the first thing for us to know. Christ said, "I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you. If ye 'know these things', happy are ye if ye do them." So here is the first thing for us to know. Christ upholds the holy and righteous requirements of God and at the same time he loves and ministers to his people. In fact, these two things are inseparably united. He went to the cross because he loved God and he loved those the Father gave him. But Christ must make them righteous and holy in order for us to come into his presence and experience his love. God's love and righteousness and holiness are inseparable. He loves his own in righteousness and holiness unto the end.

Therefore, God's grace and love constrains each blood bought child to never compromise the truth of the gospel of God's electing grace, of Christ's particular redemption of his people, and of the Holy Spirit's invincible calling keeping grace. And at the same time, his love constrains us to never cease loving one another unto the end, faults and all! It is because these things—faith, truth and love—are inseparably united when God has given us in new heart.

LOVE OVERCOMING HELL

Notice, Christ also loved his own while as yet he knew his betrayer was in his midst, "*And supper being ended, the devil having now put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray him.*" (Jn 13: 2)

This shows us that a betrayer being in their midst, the devil himself ruling Judas' heart, could not prevent Christ from loving and serving his own, not Judas, but his own elect.

Brethren, Christ said "*the gates of hell shall not prevail*" against Christ and his church. (Mt 16: 18) So never be daunted by Satan's craftiness. Let the enemy of the cross, rage. By the power and grace of our King and Christ, the devil and his hellish host shall never hinder us from believing on Christ and from loving one another.

LOVE CONDESCENDING TO SERVE

Christ Jesus loved his own by taking the lowest position of service in order to wash his people. One of the most amazing aspects of God's grace is that the one who did this work for us is himself the Son of God, "*Jesus knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he was come from God, and went to God...*" (Jn 13: 3)

Notice, it speaks of Christ's work as having already been accomplished and he already possessing his glory. It teaches us that our Savior's dominion as our Mediator is an eternal dominion. He has always possessed all power in heaven and earth for he is the Son of God! He is "*the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.*" (Rev 13: 8) The works of God were finished from the foundation of the world. (Heb 4:3). In Christ, all God's elect were blessed and accepted from everlasting. He came from God to redeem his people from our sins as the King and when he finished the work he went to God as the King. He is God and Man in one. That very night, it was so. And it is so now! And he knew it was so.

Yet, knowing himself to be God Almighty, he humbled himself to wash the feet of his saints. Understand what the washing of feet was. In those days in that land they traveled in sandals in the hot sand. So washing

the feet of your company was customary. But it was performed by the lowliest servant in the house because no one wanted to wash the dirty feet of weary travelers.

It is amazing love and humility that the GodMan condescended that night to literally wash the feet of his apostles. But what a perfect way for Christ to illustrate his most amazing love and humility which Christ showed his people by coming down from glory to the lowest possible position to wash us in his blood on the cursed cross.

What a picture he gives us in verses 4-6 and in verse 12 of his work of redemption! Verse 4 says, *“He arose from supper”* like as the Son of God arose from his throne in glory. *“He laid aside his garments and took a towel, and girded himself”* like as the Son of God *“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.”* (Php 2: 6-8)

Verse 5 says, *“After that he poureth water into a bason”* like as the GodMan poured out his precious blood on the cross. *“And began to wash the disciples’ feet”* like as Christ purged his people from our sins, judicially under the law, declaring God just and the Justifier of all who believe on Jesus (Rom 3: 24-26); like as Christ washes us in regeneration by the Holy Spirit (Titus 3: 4-7); and like as Christ continually cleanses us of all sin as our Advocate with the Father as we confess our sins to him (1 Jn 1: 9-10; 2: 1-2) *“And to wipe them with the towel wherewith he was girded”* like as Christ robes us in his righteousness through faith.

Verse 12 says, *“So after he had washed their feet, and had taken his garments, and was set down again he said unto them, Know ye what I have done to you?”* like as after Christ finished the work of redemption, he arose from the dead, took his garments of glory, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on High, from where he teaches each of his redeemed through the gospel the great work he has done for us and in us.

Then Christ said, *“If ye know these things, happy are ye if you do them.”* (Jn 13: Sinner, do you know these things? This is the one thing needful. Peter protested not to be washed this way. But it was only pride. The Lord told Peter in verse 8, *“If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me.”* Pride will destroy you. That is what our self-righteous, legal works are. It is not our works that washes away our sins. Nor is it baptism that washes away our sins. Christ baptized no one. Notice, Christ washed Judas feet, but it did not change his heart. By that, Christ shows us that no outward observances can wash us judicially or inwardly. Christ himself must wash us or we have no part with him. Again, Christ must wash us judicially—(Romans 3: 24-26); experimentally (Titus 3: 4-7) and continually (1 John 1:9).

Brethren, what peace to be washed in the blood of the Lamb, washed in regeneration, and continually forgiven and cleansed by our Advocate. *“Jesus saith to him, He that is washed...is clean every whit.”* And to every believer Christ declares in the court of our conscience, *“And ye are clean.”* (Jn 13: 10; 1 Cor 6: 11) To be clean is to be righteous and holy and accepted of God. Sinner, do not protest against Christ, submit to Christ in faith and *“thou shalt be saved.”* (Rom 10: 9)

LOVE ONE ANOTHER

Lastly, Christ teaches every believer to love one another even as Christ loves us, *“Ye call me Master and Lord: and ye say well; for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another’s feet. For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you. Verily, verily, I say unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord; neither he that is sent greater than he that sent him. If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them.”* (Jn 13: 13-17)

Not one of us is greater than our Lord Jesus Christ. He is our Master and our Lord. He says, *“If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another’s feet.”*

We do not wash feet literally because the only ordinances Christ instituted were Baptism and the Lord’s Table, not the washing of feet. Our Lord means so much more than that we literally go through the outward form of washing one another’s feet.

As we have seen in this passage, with his great work before him, yet he loved us. Therefore, whatever work is before you and I, let us yet love one another. With the pain of the cross before him, yet he loved us. Therefore, in the midst of our trials, let us yet love one another. With the joy of the Father before him, he yet loved us. Therefore, with joy before us, let us yet love one another. Unto the end, he yet loved us. Therefore, let us love one another faults and all to the end. With a devil in his midst, yet he loved us. Therefore, if the devil tries to stop us, let us yet love one another. Condescending from his throne in glory, he loved us. Therefore, let us abase ourselves to the lowest service to love and serve one another. He washed us from our sins because he loved all those the Father gave to him. Therefore, let us cover the sins of our brethren in love as he did us. He laid down his life for us because he loved us. Therefore, let us lay down our lives in love for one another.

There is something else important for us not to miss in this passage. What a lesson we learn from Peter’s objection! When our brethren attempt serve us in love, do not object to them doing so. Let us never let our pride get in the way of letting our brethren do what God has enable them to do in love for us.

I recall one occasion as a young believer where the Lord taught me this lesson through a loving brother in Christ. He was offering to help me while I was in need. When I objected he said to me, “God has blessed me with the unspeakable gift of his Son. He has given me faith to believe on Christ and to love my brethren. God has given me the substance and the heart to cheerfully help. It is my joy to do so. So please do not take this privilege from me.” How God used those words to melt my heart and teach me that it is just as important that we are willing to be served by our brethren, as it is for us to love our brethren.

Lastly, notice, true happiness is knowing Christ and obeying him from a willing and happy heart. Christ said, *“If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them.”* (Jn 13: 17) Indeed, the only true happiness that exists is in knowing Christ and obeying him. But our Redeemer says that if we know these things then we are happy. That is why we do them. God’s grace and love toward believers makes us happy. Therefore, believers do what we do for one another, not grudgingly or of necessity, but from a willing, cheerful heart. That is the heart with which Christ served God his Father and successfully redeemed all God’s elect. And that is the only kind of doer that God loves. (2 Cor 9: 7)

Amen!