

“Credo, Domine; adjuva incredulitatem meam,” Mark 9:24.

“Domine, volumus Jesum videre,” John 12:21.

JOHN 13

¹Before the Passover Festival, Jesus knew that the time had come for him to leave this world and go to the Father. Having loved those who were his own in the world, he loved them to the end.

²By the time the supper took place, the Devil had already put the idea into the heart of Judas, son of Simon Iscariot, to betray Jesus.

³Jesus knew that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come from God and was going back to God. ⁴He got up from the supper and laid aside his outer garment. He took a towel and tied it around his waist. ⁵Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples’ feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around him ...

¹²After Jesus had washed their feet and put on his outer garment, he reclined at the table again. “Do you understand what I have done for you?” he asked them.

¹³“You call me Teacher and Lord. You are right, because I am. ¹⁴Now if I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet.

¹⁵Yes, I have given you an example so that you also would do just as I have done for you.



Can you imagine a long family walk, maybe a pickup game of ball, and then some rough-housing with the kids on the playground? Finally, you kick back and relax in your favorite chair, and someone gets out a bowl and washes your feet!

You and I don’t give much thought to washing our feet. We usually have a fresh pair of socks in the morning, maybe another we change into for a workout, and then we clean up by standing in soapy water the next morning—maybe including a spot check for our feet. We’ve done a lot more hand-washing lately, as we prepare our hands for the next activity. Maybe you even sing the ABCs when you wash your hands, just to make sure you’re doing it long enough. But . . . your feet? Even as clean as we keep our feet, most of us wouldn’t wish a personal footwashing on our worst enemy.

Now imagine that footwash again, only with your favorite teacher or closest friend was doing the dirty work. This could get uncomfortable. You'd have plenty of time to sit uneasily and think about what is going on. You'd have plenty of time to question your relationship with that person and come up with the conclusion that this friend of yours really cares.

Now imagine it is Jesus doing the footwashing. During that footwashing, you'd grapple with your pride and your desire to pay Jesus back somehow. You'd also consider your sins, as any sinner does standing before God. You may consider what a fool you were when you argued with the other Eleven about who was the greatest; here the greatest was acting like the least! You'd be kicking yourself the whole time, wouldn't you? You'd wish you had no hands pride, and you'd be motivated to make your hands into . . .

Hands of Humility

Jesus Christ sent His disciples into the city to prepare the Passover supper for Him. When they were gathered, He took a basin and began to wash their feet. In this, we see what a person Jesus was—inconceivably friendly. *“You call me Teacher and Lord. You are right, because I am. Now if I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet”* (v. 13-14).

There was no need for Christ to do any of this. He could have said to Peter, “You go wash Judas' feet. I'm the Master.” But instead He subjected Himself and set aside His majesty, behaving like a servant.

Peter tried to object. He again tried to instruct Jesus. He said, “You are the Master, and I am the servant.” But Jesus stopped him and went on to explain the meaning of the foot-washing.

In washing the feet of the disciples, Christ gave an example of love, for this is the nature of love—to serve and be subject to another. If one esteems another more highly than himself, then love and all good works are there. Jesus said, *“You also ought to wash one another's feet”* (v.14). So Christ made Himself the lowliest.

We are looking at genuine love, for the heart is with the loved one and wants to do that person's pleasure. In this we find empathy, mercy, humanity, compassion, and a helping hand. So love your neighbor and esteem your neighbor higher than yourself.

But then again, some churches come and say that's just an ordinary command. The devil breaks in and says this love isn't enough. "You have to go farther; you have to become a monk, put on a fancy hood, and fast for six days." Even faith is called an ordinary thing, and we are told to do something extraordinary. You have to keep an extraordinary command.

We reply, "Where are those who kept even the simple command? Have you? You haven't, because there isn't anyone in the world who has." In all humility, Christians know we have scarcely made a beginning in faith. To the very grave, we will have to keep on learning—learn how to have simple faith and learn simply how to love.

It is a mighty love that, when Jesus Christ in His divine majesty humbles Himself, everyone judges Him and gets confused. There's Judas, sitting like a lord, full of the devil, and the Lord God crawls like a servant with a basin and towel before him. He already denied Jesus as God and as Friend, but then acts like he belongs there.

Let's not forget that, after this meal, Jesus would institute Holy Communion. Jesus was soon not only the servant, but the selfless host, of something very loving. He would piece off His body and pour out His blood for the most loving purpose—to wash their souls free of sin. Is there any connection between the washing of feet and the sacrament to follow?

Consider that Paul said we must approach communion with prepared hearts. We are told that whoever eats the bread and drinks the cup in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sinning against the Lord's body and blood (1 Cor. 11:27). This means that the body and blood are really there. In the statements, "*This is my body,*" and, "*This is my blood,*" IS means IS. Those who don't believe that fact receive the sacrament to their judgment.

This automatically takes a great deal of humility. The Twelve attenders of this supper were in a continuous argument about who was the greatest. Did that conversation take place before the sacrament, or afterwards? If you take Luke chronologically, and it happened after the sacrament, it would be a natural argument, since it came after Jesus pointed out that one of them would betray Him. However, if you take Luke's record as it is with other events, less chronological than in order of importance, then they have already fought over the greatest, and this was Jesus teaching them humility.

So Paul tells the Corinthians—and any Christian who might read that first letter—to examine themselves, they need to judge themselves; and if they judged themselves, they wouldn't be judged (1 Cor. 11:31).

Under any circumstances, these things are true: It takes humility and self-abasement to self-examine and be prepared for the Lord's Supper. That is because to deny yourself and confess your sins from the heart is humble. Moreover, faith in Jesus depends on His works, meaning that at the same time it refuses to depend on our own works. Faith despairs of our own works.

If Jesus had based His service on the disciples' behavior, no one would have had their feet washed. No one would have had their sins forgiven, because Jesus would have never made it to the cross. Jesus' humility shines brighter and greater than ours because it's not based on human nature. Jesus' humility is based on God's love and grace. He serves us because He loves us. His love is unconditional. His love is perfect. Not our behavior, but God's love moved Him to wrap the towel around his waist and wash their feet—even the feet of Judas.

Jesus came to serve you. "*The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many*" (Matt 20:28). Christ's obedient death served you well; it paid the ransom price for your pride and entitled attitude, for making people feel smaller and lesser, and for every other shallow and insecure excuse we've ever offered God for failure to serve. "*The blood of Jesus, His Son, purifies us from all sin*" (1 Jn 1:7).

Therefore, the Lord prepared the hearts of His own friends for the sacrament, in part by washing their feet. The sacrament, in turn, prepares us to serve one another in love, just as Jesus has served us; Amen.

Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in Him, so that you may overflow with hope, through the power of the Holy Spirit. Amen.