

What We Know Matters

John 13

Quentin Smith, September 23, 2018

Well, thank you Jeremy. Let's pray. Father, we are thankful to be here, we're thankful for Your Word. Lord, as ever, we understand that we come under Your Word, we submit to Your Word. And Lord, You have so much that You want to and need to teach us. And so, this morning, Father, I pray that You'd be with me as I open up this chapter. And I pray that You would give us through your Holy Spirit what it is that we need to hear from You today. Lord, we approach this throne of grace with confidence and what a privilege that is. So, we pray, Lord, that as we read and as we talk about the things in this passage, that You would bless us with growth and understanding and encouragement from Your Word. And we pray it in Jesus' name, amen.

Well, open up your Bibles to John chapter 13. Jeremy is going to preach this passage next week and as is always the case, when one comes to the Word of God, there is never enough that one can say. And so, I'm confident that because we haven't really collaborated on this, what I have to say today will not only be said much better next week, but also, he will draw out different things that the Holy Spirit has put on my heart today to share with you.

As we come to John 13, we come to what's known as the "Upper Room" discourse. There were four discourses that Jesus gave. Discourses, which were sort of prolonged episodes of teaching. One is the Sermon on the Mount - Matthew 5 through 7. The other is the Mystery of the Parables Discourse in Matthew 13, where He talks about what the Kingdom of Heaven is like. The third is the Olivet Discourse in Matthew 24 and 25, where He talks about end times, the things to be prepared for. Then the fourth one is this, the Upper Room Discourse.

Why the upper room? Well, you'll remember that this is the Passover time. You'll remember that Jesus has prepared, has sent one of His disciples to prepare ... You remember how they were guided to this upper room and there is a feast. There is a supper, the Last Supper, if you will, prepared in the upper room. And this discourse will take us from John 13 through to John 17, to the end of that. After which, He will go out and be betrayed. It's also the last night of His life.

So, as we come to this passage, there is a sense of intensity because I have to ask you, if you had the knowledge that this was your last night to live, what would you say? What would the things on your heart be to your family, to your friends, those whom you have influence with? And if you were the Son of God and you knew that this was your last night on earth, what would it be that would be on your heart?

So, we're going to start in chapter 13, and as Jeremy takes us through 17, those chapters are going to be filled with that sense of urgency, that sense of finality, that sense of, "I have this one final time to teach." There will be no more teaching in public. He will teach in private. And after that, He will go out and be betrayed by Judas. These are the words of a Man who knows what is about to happen.

I want us to read this passage just starting in verse 1 together.

1 Now before the Feast of the Passover, Jesus knowing that His hour had come that He would depart out of this world to the Father, having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end. 2 During supper, the devil having already put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon, to betray Him, 3 Jesus, knowing that the Father had given Him all things into His hands, and that He had come forth from God and was going back to God, 4 got up.”

I want you to focus in on the two phrases there, “knowing that”. You see it in verse 1, “Jesus knowing that His hour had come [knowing] that He would depart out of the world to the Father, [knowing that He had] loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end.”

Jesus knew that this had come to an end, but He persevered to the end. He knew that this time on earth was done, but He knew that there was a lot still to come. He persevered. And it says there that, “He loved them to the end.” You know that Jesus finished well. You know that for the joy that was set before Him, He scorned the cross. You know that what He knew dictated how He ended.

And knowing in verse 3, “Knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands and that He had come forth from God and was going back to God ...” Stop there. Jesus knew that He had all authority from the Father, had been sent to earth and was going back. Knowing that, He does an unusual thing. He gets up and He begins to wash His disciples’ feet. And when you think of all the things that He might have chosen to do at the beginning of this time period with the disciples, this is what He chooses. As He leads up to the culmination of why He came to the earth, that He would go to the cross, He turns to the disciples and wants to leave with them one very important message. And He does it, not with His words but with His actions. And He does that, so that they’ll remember. He picks up a basin, he lays aside His garments - verse 4, He takes a towel, then He girds Himself. He pours water into the basin and He begins to wash the disciples’ feet and to wipe them with the towel with which He was girded.

You will remember that we have just studied where Mary breaks this alabaster vial of perfume and washes His feet and wipes it with her hair. And now, He picks up, at this separate time, a basin of water and He takes to the disciples’ feet.

This is a graphic illustration of the master taking on a slavely duty. This is a graphic illustration of Jesus being willing to humble Himself and do what a slave would have done in those times.

Peter is horrified. Peter says, verse 8, “Never shall You wash my feet.” And Jesus answered him and said, “If I don’t wash you, you have no part with me.” “Peter, you don’t get it. If I don’t wash you, you are resisting the very message that I need to leave.” And then Peter does ... Peter, and he flip flops and he says, “Well, then everything. Not only my feet, then wash my hands and my head as well.” Peter recognizes that Jesus is saying, “If you don’t let Me do this, you can’t be a part of Me.” So, he wants all in. That is Peter’s heart, his love for the Lord. Jesus says, “I don’t need to do that, Peter.”

“10 He who has bathed needs only to wash his feet but is completely clean; and you are clean, but not all of you.” 11 For He knew the one who was betraying Him; for this

reason He said, “not all of you are clean.” 12 So when He had washed their feet, and taken His garments and reclined at the table again, He said to them, “Do you know what I’ve done for you? 13 You call Me Teacher and Lord; and you are right, for so I am.”

“You understand the authority with which I say this, you understand the authority with which I have walked on the earth, you have seen the miracles. You call Me Teacher and Lord, and that is right.” He affirms the authority.

“14 And if I, as Lord and Teacher washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet. 15 For I gave you an example that you also should do as I did to you. 16 Truly, truly, I say to you, a slave is not greater than his master, nor is one who is sent greater than the one who sent him. 17 If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them.”

I’ll tell you what struck me as I went through this passage, was the marriage of verse 17 to verses 1 and 3. We talked about Jesus knowing and how that guided how He lived out this last night of His life. How it prepared Him to endure the cross, how it prepared Him to leave this message with them. And then He says, verse 17, “If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them.” And it struck me as we begin point number one, what we know matters. In our Christian walk, what we know matters. In our Christian walk, what we know dictates how we live. What we know, if we remember it, will help us to interpret what’s happening in our life. We’ll have a Biblical worldview when we anticipate and interpret the things that God brings into our lives. So, what we know and believe and remember, really does matter in terms of how we live.

You know, if you think about it, this is a strong exhortation from a man who’s going to die, to give His life. And He says, “You also should not be too proud to serve and love one another in the same way. The slave is not above the master. When I leave, this is what I want you to do. I want you to wash one another’s feet.”

When I think about when Jesus was asked, what were the first and greatest commandment. What did he say? Matthew 22:34 says,

34 When the Pharisees heard that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered themselves together. 35 And one of them, the lawyer, asked Him a question, testing Him, 36 “Teacher, which is the great commandment of the law?” 37 And He said to them, “‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ 38 This is the great and foremost commandment. 39 The second is like it, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ 40 On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets.”

That’s what Jesus is saying here. “You love your neighbour, you wash their feet. You love your neighbour, you serve them. You love your neighbour as you love yourself.” And we know that we love ourselves a lot.

How we love each other varies. We love one another by cooking meals. We love one another by showing up and praying. We love one another when we counsel. We love one another by encouraging. We love one another when we write cards. We love one another when we serve.

But I want to focus in today on the “why” we love one another. Because we can do all of that and we can be going through motions and be so disconnected from the Lord. So, I want to spend some time describing for us the motivation with which we ought to wash one another's feet. Because the “why” we do that is based on what we know, and the “why” really matters.

So, I'm going to go to a few passages with you. I want you to turn to Hebrews chapter 4, as we just take a little aside here and we ask ourselves the question, what is it that we know? Because point number one, what we know matters. I want to read Hebrews chapter 4:12, and we're going to finish in 5:3. And I want to ask the question, what is it that you value the most in your faith? What is that thing to which you cling as a Christian? Let's read this passage together and I'll talk about that. The writer of Hebrews says this in verse 12 of chapter 4: “12 For the Word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and the intentions of the heart. 13 And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are open and laid bare to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do.”

When you look at those two verses, you see the Word of God being described as living and active and sharper than any double-edged sword. You see the Word of God being described as piercing to the division of soul and spirit. That Word of God that we read, we hold in our hands, is the thing that penetrates right to the core of who we are, what we're thinking, what our intentions are. And God says, verse 13, “There is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are open and laid bare.” That's a pretty exposed place to be, and you know that's where we are before God. We understand that. But what is the most precious thing about that? That God knows us intimately and yet He doesn't discard us. Verse 14,

14 Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. 15 For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin. 16 Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.”

I would say that I think that is the most precious aspect of our faith with God. The fact that He knows us so intimately and He still loves us. Not only does He still love us, He wants us to come with a boldness. He wants us to come with a confidence to Him as a Father to the throne of grace, to find grace in a time of need. There is nothing more precious than that because it's a place of safety, it's a place of acceptance, it's a place of love. And that's what causes us to love the Lord, our God with all of our heart and soul and mind and strength.

This passage is describing Jesus as the high priest, but in chapter 5, it goes on to talk about the appointed high priest within the Old Testament. So, let's just read that. We talk about, “Every high priest taken from among men is appointed on behalf of men in things pertaining to God, in order to offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins.” That was the appointment. The priest was the one who went to God on behalf of Israel. Verse 2, “He can deal gently with the ignorant and misguided, since he himself also is beset with weakness; and because of it he is obligated to offer sacrifices for sins, as for the people, so also for himself.” Do you see yourself in there? Do you see how the humility of the high priest serving Israel comes before God with the sins of Israel?

But not only the sins of Israel, he recognizes that he's there as a man who bares his own sins. And so he's offering sacrifices not only behalf of the people, but also on himself. And so, he's gentle with the ignorant and misguided because he understands that he is beset with weakness. When we look deeply at our own lives, when that word opens us up like a skillful surgeon, right to the bone. When we know that standing before God, He knows truly who we are and we know who we are and yet, God does not discard us, and that He invites us to come - that creates within us a humility because we are just one of many sinners. And it is that humility that will transform our worship. It is that humility that will transform our serving of one another. It is that humility that drives that love for the Lord and then love for your neighbour.

Let's just think about our worship for now. You think about the Old Testament sacrifices, and you think about Psalm 51 where David is post-Bathsheba. He's broken. He is repentant. He has sinned so greatly and the life of his child has been taken. And in Psalm 51:16, he says to God, "You do not delight in sacrifice, otherwise I would give it; You are not pleased with burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and a contrite heart, O God, You will not despise."

Well, hang on a minute, the sacrifices were commanded. There are books of the Old Testament in the Pentateuch that talk about just exactly how you are supposed to do this. "So, you're not pleased with burnt offerings God? But we're told to give the burnt offering. David, what's going on?" Well, the reality is that in the Old Testament Law, the sacrifices were to be given, but the sacrifices were to be given with the right heart. The sacrifices were to be made because in the sacrifice of that animal, my sin was placed on that animal, and the animal died in my place. And there's a foreshadowing of Christ who would come as the Lamb of God and who would be sacrificed on our behalf. What happened was it became a ritual. It became something that was done without remembering what they knew, without remembering that the heart had to be involved in that sacrifice for it to be acceptable to God. And so, as we look at this, what they knew and what was going on in their heart really mattered to God. The sacrifices were commanded, but it was how they came. So, in our lives, when we are living sacrifices, when we do the things we do, it's really important for us to remember that the heart has to be there before the works. What we know has to drive what we do.

James talks about this and he talks about in chapter 2, in verse 14, this idea between faith and works. "I've got faith, you've got works," James says, "What use is it, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but he has no works? Can that faith save him?" If you say you have faith but it doesn't show up in your life and there's no fruit, what is that? That's a confession, but it may ring hollow in the mind of God.

15 If a brother or sister is without clothing and in need of daily food, 16 and one of you says to them, "Go in peace and be warmed and be filled," and yet you don't give them what is necessary for their body, what use is that? 17 Even so faith, if it has no works, is dead being by itself. 18 But someone may well say, "You have faith and I have works; show me your faith without the works, and I will show you my faith by my works."

You see what we do is linked to what's going on in our heart. The faith is there first. The works are the outpouring from that faith.

Secondly, go to Ephesians chapter 4. We're talking about what we know and how it influences what we do. The book of Ephesians is roughly divided into two, the first three chapters and then the second three chapters. And there's a theological principle called "the indicative and the imperative" and I just want to explain that to you a little bit here.

The indicative is really a word that expresses an objective, fact or reality. And for the Christian, it's who we are in Christ. What has God done for us? That's the indicative. What has God done for us? Who are we? What is the reality? The imperative talks about the commands. What are we to do, and it has to be in that way. The indicative has to come before imperative. Who are we in Christ? Therefore, what do we do? And Ephesians is broken up into those two chapters because the first chapters 1, 2, and 3 is the indicative. All that Christ has done for us.

Chapter 1:11, "We have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of as will." He predestined us, He redeemed us. Chapter 2,

1 You were dead in your trespasses and sins, 2 in which you formally walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience. 3 Among them we all too formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath even as the rest. But God ..."

God made us alive, raised us up in Him, seated us with Him in the heavenly places. Chapter 3:6, "The Gentiles are fellow heirs, fellow members of the body, fellow partakers of the promise of Christ Jesus through the gospel." Verse 14, chapter 3.

14 For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, 15 from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name, 16 that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man, 17 so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; and you, being rooted and grounded in love, 18 may be able to comprehend [that what you know] with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, 19 and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, so that you will be filled up to all the fullness of God.

Three chapters of where we are in Christ, what God has done. And chapter 4 opens with, "Therefore, I the prisoner of the Lord, implore you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, and patience, showing tolerance for one another in love." The indicative, what Christ has done leading to the imperative - how we live the command. What you know, showing up in your life.

Fast forward to chapter 4:25, a wonderful passage. Just to the end of chapter 4 here,

25 Therefore, laying aside falsehood, speak truth. 26 Be angry, do not yet sin; don't let the sun go down on your anger, 27 don't give the devil an opportunity. 28 He who steals must steal no longer; but rather labor, performing with his own hands what is good, so that he will have something to share with the one who has need. 29 Let no unwholesome

word proceed from your mouth, but only such a word as is good for edification according to the need of the moment, so that it will give grace to those who hear. 30 Don't grieve the Holy Spirit by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. 31 Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice.

Here's the verse I want you to focus in on: "32 Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ has forgiven you." There's the motivation, there's what you know. And so, because of what you know, because the motivation is that God in Christ has forgiven you, you be kind. You be tender-hearted and you forgive because you know what you are beset with is weakness, just like the high priest.

Philippians chapter 2. Reading from verse one, what do we know?

1 Therefore if there is any encouragement in Christ, if there is any consolation of love [is there? Yes.], if there is any fellowship of the spirit [is there? Yes.], if any affection and compassion [is there? Yes.], 2 make my joy complete by being of the same mind, maintaining the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose. 3 Do nothing from selfish or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves; 4 do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others.

5 Having this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, 6 who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, 7 but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. 8 Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. 9 For this reason also, God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name.

You want to know how you can do that? Because you have encouragement in Christ. There's consolation of His love. There's fellowship of the Spirit. There's the affection and compassion that Christ has given us. That knowledge motivates us to live after His image.

One more in First Peter chapter 1. How do we deal with trials? How do we deal with the difficult things? We deal with the difficult things by remembering what we know. Peter writes this,

3 Blessed be the God and Father, of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, 4 to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, 5 who are being protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

That's quite a position. To have that inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade. "6 In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials, 7 so that the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ."

Our faith gives honour to Christ. When we respond to the things that He sends us in our life and we respond with faith, and we respond with faithfulness, and we respond with acceptance, and when we respond in a way that is Christ-like to the hard things that happen, Peter says, that brings glory to God. Because it's proof that our faith is actually real. Just what James had said. "And though you have not seen Him, you love Him." You love Him. You love Him to the point that you say, "Lord, I am not liking this. Lord, I don't know what you're doing." And like Job, you might say, "I look forward and I look back, I look left and right, I cannot see Him, but He knows the way I take, and when He has tried me, I shall come forth as gold." "Lord, I don't know why this happening, but I trust You and I love You and I choose to be faithful through this trial. Would You help me learn what it is that You have in store for me? Let me be that instrument." Verse 8, "You love Him, and though you do not see Him now, but believe in Him, you greatly rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, 9 obtaining as the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls."

Let's go back to John 13. So, point number one, what we know matters and it dictates how we live. And we know about grace and we know about the forgiveness in Christ, and we know about the compassion, the affection, and we know about our heavenly home, inheritance.

The passage goes on from verse 17-18 through 30, where essentially, Judas is revealed. Judas, the betrayer is revealed and it's always interesting to know as you read that passage well, how come they didn't get it? How come they didn't figure out that it was Judas? He says there that, "The one for whom I shall dip the morsel and give it to him, he is the one." And after He does that, the Bible says that Satan entered into him and Jesus said to Him, "Therefore what you do, do quickly." And it doesn't seem like they realized what was really going on. Perhaps that was divine closing of their eyes. Hard to know - the passage just doesn't tell us. But from that time on, Judas is extracted from the room, he goes off and he meets with the leaders and he betrays Jesus. But for the rest of 13 through 17, you have Christ with the faithful disciples. And He's going to talk with them about what is on His heart in the last night of His life.

But point number two that I want to make is 31 through 38. And that is this: Jesus wants us to remember what we know so that we can finish well. Finishing well is important. It's not that our salvation depends upon it, because we're going to sin. But finishing well is what real Christians do. Finishing well has meant that some have gone to the stake and been burned. Finishing well means that some have been beheaded. Finishing well means that some have been shot in our time.

By the way, I wondered if you saw the bullet hole in the back of the church. We don't know the story, but there's a bullet hole in the back of the window there. And it made me think about if somebody were to come in here with a machine gun, would we finish well? What would we do? "Renounce the faith or I will kill you!" How would we respond?

Verse 31, "Therefore, when he had gone out, Jesus said (now that Judas has left), "Now is the Son of Man glorified and God is glorified in Him; if God is glorified in Him, God will also glorify Him in Himself, and will glorify Him immediately." God is going to be glorified in Jesus's obedience. And He puts that in the present tense. "God is glorified," "the Son of Man is glorified and God is glorified in Him." He's talking about what's going to be happening, but it's

as good as done. And I want you to make that connection between our lives, the life of Christ, glorifying God and our lives, glorifying God. We are vessels in which the Holy Spirit lives and our job is to glorify God. How we do that, is we love the Lord our God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength, and we love our neighbor as ourselves. We wash each other's feet, and that brings glory to God.

Verse 33,

33 Little children, I am with you a little while longer. You will seek Me: and as I said to the Jews, now I also say to you, "Where I am going, you cannot come." 34 A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. 35 By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love one for another.

36 Simon Peter said to Him, "Lord, where are You going?" Jesus answered, "Where I go, you cannot follow Me now; but you will follow later." 37 Peter said to Him, "Lord, why can I not follow You right now? I will lay down my life for You." Jesus answered, "Will you lay down your life for Me? Truly, truly, I say to you, a rooster will not crow until you deny Me three times.

If we want to finish well, we are called to love one another. Part of the motivation of that is to remember how Christ loved us. In verse 34, "A new commandment that you love one another even as I have loved you." That's the "how". That's how we're to do it - as Christ loved us. How did He do it? He sacrificed, gave His life, wash the feet. He was kind, gentle. But we're not always going to do it perfectly.

Peter in his fashion says, "I will lay down my life for you," and in a moment where fear of man got the better of him, he denies Christ once, and twice and three times, and then the rooster crows. We will fail, but when we go back to what we remember, we will get up again and we will keep doing what we do. And what we remember is the throne of grace. What we remember is that we come boldly and confidently confessing our sin, confessing that we have sinned. Confessing our weakness, confessing that we did not do a good job. And in true fashion, God washes us clean and sends us on our way to continue bringing glory to Him in the way that we live.

So, let's wrap it up here with some application. Jesus got to a point where He had done what He needed to do, and He finished strong. There wasn't any more revelation. There wasn't anything that anybody else needed to know more than they knew. And I want to ask you, are you there? Because you've been around for a while. You've been Christians for years, some of you. There is not a lot of new information that you are needing to be exposed to, but you might have decades of life ahead of you. What that means is you take what you know and you persevere to the end, and we finish well. Don't be looking for something new and fancy, it's all right here. Remember what you know, build on that. It's not about the flash, it's about being faithful. And each step that you take will get you closer to finishing strong.

Number two, let's love one another. Let's wash each other's feet, but let's not do that without the "why". Let's be motivated by what Christ has done. Let's be motivated by the knowledge that He knows us completely, has not rejected us, but invites us to come boldly before the throne. And let that humility just be the thing that drives us to loving one another, serving one another. Let's not ever as a church reach a point where we are into form without faith. Let those deeds be driven from the heart.

Thirdly, when we fall, let's repent. Let's get up and let's move forward. Peter was still useful to the Lord for many, many years after he denied Him. And that's what God wants to use. He uses broken vessels for His glory. Why don't you pray with me.

Father, we are so thankful for the grace that shouts out from these pages. Lord, we think about the Lord Jesus and we imagine that last night of His life, the finality, the soberness, and the intentionality of "what am I going to say to My disciples", and we are so thankful that what He knew resulted in a message that we will never forget. And that was to wash His disciples' feet and the instruction for us to do the same. And I pray, Lord, that You would help us to do that in a normal way, in a natural way, in a way that is going to be Christ exalting, but driven by the right heart.

Father, I pray that as we fail that, Father, we would love and appreciate and cling to grace, all the more. And that You would work within our hearts to be models of grace. And so, I pray, Lord, that in our worship we would be that way. In our jobs, we would be that way. In our marriage, we would be that way. That we would take the knowledge that we have and it will show up in our marriages, in our work, in our church, in our parenting so that we would continue to live by grace because it's in our heart.

Thank you for this time, Father. As we transition into the Lord's Table, I just pray that this would be a very precious thought today, in Jesus' name, amen.