



“Pick Up A Towel and Follow Me”

John 13:1-20

Sermon Date: September 13th, 2020

Reflections on Sunday’s Sermon

Prayer

As you begin your study this week, spend some time thanking the Lord for your Home Group and for the opportunity to begin meeting together again. Pray that the Lord would continue to grow you and the members of your group in your love of Him, His Word, and one another as you study the book of John together. As you pray, make the following words your own before the Lord (prayer taken from Everyday Prayers by Scotty Smith).

“Dear Jesus, the story in John 13 always grabs my heart, but today it’s rekindling awe. It’s the night of your betrayal – the night you would be denied and abandoned not just by Peter but by all of the disciples. You knew this and yet you persisted in disrobing yourself, bending low, and washing the dirty feet of these broken, bungling men.

The beauty and truth revealed in this scene is what keeps me sane-gospel sane. It anchors me when I lose my moorings, centers me when I feel crazy, quiets me when I’m restless, reels my heart in when I am in a wandering mode.

This is how you love each of your followers, all of your disciples, your whole bride. You’ve made us your own. You bought us with the very price of your blood. We were redeemed from sin and death and placed into your righteousness and embrace. Absolutely nothing can separate us from your love.

While we’re in this world, you’re constantly loving us. You’re loving us when we’re alive to your presence and affections, and you’re loving us when it feels like you’re ignoring our prayers, indifferent to our pain, or displeased with our lives. In fact, whether we perceive it or not, the most constant can-be-counted-upon reality in our lives is not death and taxes but your loving-kindness.

Jesus, it’s the last line in this little verse [v. 13] that nearly does me in. As with the men in the upper room, so with those of us in any of a number of rooms right now: you’re still committed to showing us the full extent of your love – its height, depth, width, and breadth.

This turns our gaze to your cross, for it’s in your death, Jesus, that we realize that there’s no greater love to be found anywhere. On the cross, you laid down your life for others: for the rebel other, the foolish other, the sinful other – for me.

Though you died for a huge pan-national bride, I declare today that the Son of God loved me and gave himself for me (Gal. 2:20). This isn’t narcissism; it is necessity. It’s not selfish; it’s sacred. It’s not Western individualism; it’s deeply personal. I’m once again in awe, Jesus. Intensify my awe even more... I pray in your truly astonishing name. Amen.”

Scripture

John 13:1–20 – (English Standard Version)

1 Now before the Feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that his hour had come to 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, when the devil had already put it 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 had come from God and was going back to God, 4 rose from supper. He laid aside his outer garments, and taking a towel, tied it around his waist. 5 Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel that was wrapped around him. 6 He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, "Lord, do you wash my feet?" 7 Jesus answered him, "What I am doing you do not understand now, but afterward you will understand." 8 Peter said to him, "You shall never wash my feet." Jesus answered him, "If I do not wash you, you have no share with me." 9 Simon Peter said to him, "Lord, not my feet only but also my hands and my head!" 10 Jesus said to him, "The one who has bathed does not need to wash, except for his feet, but is completely clean. And you are clean, but not every one of you." 11 For he knew who was to betray him; that was why he said, "Not all of you are clean."

12 When he had washed their feet and put on his outer garments and resumed his place, he said to them, "Do you understand what I have done to you? 13 You call me Teacher and Lord, and you are right, for so I am. 14 If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. 15 For I have given you an example, that you also should do just as I have done to you. 16 Truly, truly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. 17 If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them. 18 I am not speaking of all of you; I know whom I have chosen. But the Scripture will be fulfilled, 'He who ate my bread has lifted his heel against me.' 19 I am telling you this now, before it takes place, that when it does take place you may believe that I am he. 20 Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever receives the one I send receives me, and whoever receives me receives the one who sent me."

Handling the Word

1. Before you get to our text this week, take some time to read through the passages we covered last year in the gospel of John (Chapters 7-12). Try to recall some of what you learned in those passages and write down any common themes and/or truths to which John has drawn our attention.
2. Our passage this week opens another major section of John's Gospel (which includes chapters 13-17). J.C. Ryle described this section in this way: "*In every age the contents of these chapters have been justly regarded as one of the most precious parts of the Bible. They have been the meat and drink, the strength and comfort of all true-hearted Christians.*" Based upon what you know of the chapters (often described as Jesus' farewell discourse), do you agree with Ryle's description? Why or why not?

Understanding and Applying

1. The context for the passage in John 13 is the Last Supper. Interestingly, John doesn't say much at all about the actual supper. So, in order to gain greater context of the situation, please take a moment to read through Luke 22:7-27. Write down some thoughts about what happened this night, particularly in light of what you know is coming in John 13, when Jesus will wash His disciples' feet.
2. John tells us in John 13:1, that Jesus loved his disciples "*to the end.*" As you think back over the actions and statements of the disciples, why may this have been an especially difficult task? Can you give some examples? What does this teach you about loving others "*to the end*"? What will you do about it?
3. In John 13:2, John tells us of the devil putting it in Judas' heart to betray Jesus. Look up the following verses and write down what they tell us about the devil. Pay particular attention to the different names given of the devil as well. What do they tell us about his character and his schemes?

Isaiah 14:12-15 -

Matthew 4:1-3 -

2 Corinthians 11:3 -

John 14:30 -

Ephesians 2:2 -
4. Are there any areas of sin in your own life that might give a foothold for the devil to have mastery over you? If so, what would the Lord have you do with respect to that sin (see Acts 26:18 and Eph. 6:10-20)? It is understandable if you don't want to share this one with the group, but there are huge benefits if you do decide to share. Either way, take this question seriously before the Lord.
5. John 13:3-5 tell us of Jesus getting up before the supper, putting on a towel around his waist, and filling up a basin with water. The disciples must have known what Jesus was planning on doing. What do you think was going through their minds as they watched Jesus prepare to wash their feet? Why is it often more difficult to receive something like this than it is to do something in humility like this? What might this tell us about our own hearts?

6. Jesus and Peter have a conversation in vv. 6-10 in which Jesus uses the words “bathe” and “wash” and “clean” in two different ways. He certainly did “clean” them by washing their feet—but put more profoundly, Jesus uses this word in a symbolic way to speak about Peter’s (and our) need for being spiritually clean. Look up the following verses and write down why it’s imperative to be spiritually clean: Psalm 24:3-4; Psalm 51:7; Matthew 23:25-28.

7. After all the preparation and conversations, Jesus finally washes the disciples’ feet (John 13:5, 12). As you may imagine, this was a very demeaning task and something that only a servant would perform. What does this tell us about Jesus? Read the following verses and describe what you learn about Jesus and servanthood:

Mark 10:45 -

Luke 18:14 -

Luke 22:44-47 -

Philippians 2:5-8 -

8. Read John 13:13-15 and summarize what Jesus is saying. What are the practical implications for us today? In what ways do you need to repent because this is not how you’re living? Write down some specific actions you can and will do now as a result of seeing the example of Jesus in washing the feet of his disciples?

9. What has been encouraging to your soul during your time studying this passage? What verse or concept increases your love of Christ and your desire to know Him intimately?

“As believers in Jesus... We are washed in his precious blood, and are whiter than snow; but these feet of ours constantly touch this defiling earth, so they need every day to be washed.”
C.H. Spurgeon