

John 13.18-35 / COB / 01.11.15

Introduction

† **[Slide 1: Title]** Let me open in prayer...

† We will begin today at John 13.18. You can turn there in your Bible if you like.

- We were all relieved last week, because Jesus did *not* command that we wash each other's feet. None of us wanted to take part in that, either as the washer or as the washee. Have any of you washed someone's feet before? What was it like for you? Have any of you had your feet washed like this? What was it like for you? When as a teaching tool I have washed feet in small groups, I came across some salty dogs, and experienced how awkward and humbling it can be.
- What did Jesus command his disciples to do? He said his disciples must learn to humbly and sacrificially serve one another, and that does apply to us. And that is bigger and harder [and sometimes even more stinky] than washing feet.

† Let's reset the scene. Jesus and his twelve apostles were celebrating the Passover Feast in the upper room of someone's house in Jerusalem. Jesus dressed himself like a slave and washed their feet as a symbol of the spiritual cleansing they would receive through his sacrifice on the cross.

- Then Jesus told them that since he – their teacher and master – was willing to humbly and sacrificially serve them, they should humbly and sacrificially serve each other. Now we pick up the narrative, with this scene in progress, in 13.18.

[Slide 2: 13.18] John 13.18 NET: [Jesus still speaking] **"What I am saying does not refer to all of you. I know the ones I have chosen. But this is to fulfill the scripture, 'The one who eats my bread has turned against me.'"**

† Here we have a quotation of Psalm 41.9. Literally, this psalm says, **"The one who eats my bread has lifted up his heel against me,"** or **"has made his heel great against me."** It is not clear today exactly what this idiom meant, but it seems to imply aggression. Aggression by someone who shared your bread, your hospitality, was considered an especially offensive betrayal in this culture.

[Slide 3: 13.18-19] John 13.19: [Jesus still speaking] **"I am telling you this now, before it happens, so that when it happens you may believe that I am he."**

† In the Greek text, there is no "he" at the end. Jesus said, **"I am telling you this now, before it happens, so that when it happens you may believe that I AM."**

- We have discussed before as we studied this gospel, that I AM was the way God had referred to himself, the name God had given himself; we think it is pronounced Yahweh in Hebrew.
- So when Jesus periodically proclaims that he is I AM, he is making a statement about being the divine Son of God who is in total unity with God the Father, the God of the Old Testament scripture of the Jews. That is to what the "he" would refer in English: that I am Yahweh.

- † Jesus is telling them that the betrayal is coming – as he has been telling them that his death is coming – so they will not lose their faith when it happens. He is preparing them for the dark time of his arrest and crucifixion, so they will stick together and figure things out, and preparing them for the revelation about his deity that would come through his resurrection on the third day.
 - Jesus wants them to understand that he chose Judas as one of the twelve, though he knew Judas would betray him; this was part of God the Father’s plan, which would fulfill the prophecy in Psalm 41.9.
- † Now David had written Psalm 41 about 1000 years earlier, about himself and his own experiences. But the promised Messiah-savior [the promised Christ] would also be the ultimate Davidic king [the ultimate king descended from David and heir to his throne], so for this reason God placed prophetic hints about the Messiah in the life and writings of David.
 - David suffered and was betrayed as part of the path God chose for him which would bring him to glory as God’s chosen king. The same was true for Jesus, a thousand years later.

[Slide 4: 13.20] John 13.20: [Jesus still speaking] “I tell you the solemn truth, whoever accepts the one I send accepts me, and whoever accepts me accepts the one who sent me.”

- † Jesus begins with ἀμὴν ἀμὴν – truly truly – an indicator that something important is coming.
- † The word translated as “accepts” here is the Greek verb λαμβάνω, which means to take or receive. But the best biblical Greek lexicon [or dictionary] says the nuance in this verse is of receiving or accepting someone in the sense that you recognize his authority.
 - So whoever receives/accepts/respects the apostle of Christ, receives/accepts/respects Christ himself, and thus also receives/accepts/respects God the Father who sent Christ.
 - This implies that if you want to receive God/accept God/respect God, you must receive/accept/respect Christ, and further you must receive/accept/respect the apostles Christ sent out through the scripture they wrote.
 - Even Billy Graham, Chuck Swindoll, Charles Stanley, David Jeremiah must respect the apostles, for they ministered by Christ’s authority. Problems begin when church leaders, or any of us, neglect that and begin to think of ourselves at the apostle level or outside of apostolic authority.
 - If Jesus is who he says – I AM! Yahweh! – then this is logical. God the Father sent the divine Son of God with authority in the Father’s name and the Son sent the apostles with authority in Christ’s name.
 - So to show respect to God, we must show respect for Christ, through showing respect for his apostles, which we do by believing and obeying the New Testament scripture they wrote and the Old Testament scripture they affirmed, which is all the revelation of God the Father.

[Slide 5: 13.21-24] John 13.21-24: When he had said these things, Jesus was greatly distressed in spirit, and testified, “I tell you the solemn truth, one of you will betray me.” The disciples began to look at one another, worried and perplexed to know which of them he was talking about. One of his disciples, the one Jesus loved, was at the table to the right of Jesus in a place of honor. So Simon Peter gestured to this disciple to ask Jesus who it was he was referring to.

- † The apostles already were struggling with Jesus' teaching about his pending suffering and death, which made no sense to their conception of him as the Messiah-savior or as the divine Son. Now he adds the news of betrayal from within their inner circle.
 - How could one of these twelve spiritual brothers, the people closest to Jesus every day, the ones who had stuck with him from the start through all the obstacles, how could one of them betray him? Jesus was visibly troubled in spirit; the apostles were at a loss as to what he meant.

- † **[Slide 6: the one Jesus loved]** As becomes evident later in this gospel, the author John refers to himself as "the disciple Jesus loved." Nobody knows for sure why he did this. Probably we can rule out arrogance or even playfully teasing another apostle like Peter, you know, that John feels he was loved more than others. I am sure such playful teasing took place – we see competitiveness among the apostles in the gospels – but I think John means more than that with this self-designation.
 - Most likely, he was in awe that Jesus chose to love him, that not only did Jesus choose him as a disciple and save him through his sacrifice and grace, not only did Jesus choose him to be one of the twelve apostles, but Jesus chose him to be one of the three people closest to him in life, to experience special things the others did not, and to outlive all the other apostles and have a tremendous impact on the church movement.
 - In other words, John loved, respected, and cherished Jesus and the love he received from Jesus, so he chose to think of himself as one Jesus loved. That's my theory, anyway.

- † **[Slide 7: U]** John was at the right of Jesus. We don't really know if that was a place of honor then.
 - The text literally says John was "**reclining on [or near] Jesus' chest.**" Remember, they were reclining around a U-shaped table, leaning on their left elbows, with their heads toward the table and their feet angled away. So John was close to Jesus, sort of turned away from him, with his head near Jesus' chest.
 - Peter literally nodded his head as a signal to John to inquire about whom Jesus was speaking, whom Jesus thought would betray him.

- [Slide 8: 13.25-26]** John 13.25-26: Then the disciple whom Jesus loved leaned back against Jesus' chest and asked him, "Lord, who is it?" Jesus replied, "It is the one to whom I will give this piece of bread after I have dipped it in the dish." Then he dipped the piece of bread in the dish and gave it to Judas Iscariot, Simon's son.

- † In John's position, he could lean back his head to Jesus' chest and see him and have a conversation with him. In the Greek there is something like "**without further ado,**" John asked his question.
 - Jesus must have spoken quietly into the ear of John, because as we will see the others were confused about Judas being the one.

- † Just like people today sometimes dip bread in spiced olive oil, at a meal like this they would dip bread into a bowl of bitter herbs mixed in a sauce of dates, raisins, and sour wine. Jesus dipped a piece of bread and handed it to Judas.

[Slide 9: 13.27-29] John 13.27-29: And after Judas took the piece of bread, Satan entered into him. Jesus said to him, "What you are about to do, do quickly." (Now none of those present at the table

understood why Jesus said this to Judas. Some thought that, because Judas had the money box, Jesus was telling him to buy whatever they needed for the feast, or to give something to the poor.)

- † As we study in all four gospels, we see that Judas was a sinful man who had never really believed in Jesus or embraced the way of God, even going so far as to steal from the ministry treasury box which was in his control.
 - The Greek of v.29, by the way, seems to indicate he was holding the money box as he went out, which could be why the others thought he was going to buy provisions for the week-long festival or to fulfill the custom of giving to the poor at Passover.
- † Satan had already influenced Judas to make a deal with the Jewish religious authorities to betray Jesus to them. Now Satan spurred Judas to go and commit that betrayal.
 - Judas could have responded to the love and service of Jesus washing his feet by repenting, but instead all this hardened his heart. The betrayal that would start in motion the arrest, torture, and crucifixion of Jesus was a sinful act by a sinful person.
 - It also was a Satanic attack on both Judas and Jesus. Satan exploited Judas' lack of faith, confusion about Jesus, and sinfulness, to guide him into one of the most infamous acts in history: betraying the Messiah-savior.
 - Satan's attack ultimately was against Jesus. We have seen before that mankind was supposed to rule the Earth in God's name, but Satan took control of this world through our sinfulness. Satan could understand the threat of Jesus, of the divine Son coming to rule the Earth on the throne of David in God's name, so he had Jesus killed.
 - What Satan did not see was that he fell into the trap God had set for him: it was God's plan that Jesus would die for the sins of the world and mankind, before coming back to rule.

[Slide 10: 13.30-33] John 13.30-33: Judas took the piece of bread and went out immediately. (Now it was night.) When Judas had gone out, Jesus said, "Now the Son of Man is glorified, and God is glorified in him. If God is glorified in him, God will also glorify him in himself, and he will glorify him right away. Children, I am still with you for a little while. You will look for me, and just as I said to the Jewish religious leaders, 'Where I am going you cannot come,' now I tell you the same."

- † We have seen before that John likes to use the symbolism of night and day. We already know it is night in this scene, because they have been eating the evening meal, but he mentions it here as a symbol of the spiritual darkness in which Judas walked, the darkness of evil that is coming against Jesus, and the darkness that would descend on the Earth in the death of Christ the next day.
- † **[Slide 11: glory]** Despite and amidst all that spiritual darkness, we have the glorification of Christ.
 - Jesus referred to himself here as the Son of Man, a name he often took for himself. The prophet Daniel said God the Father gave the Son of Man authority, glory, and sovereign power; all nations and peoples of every language would worship him; his dominion would be an everlasting dominion that would not pass away, and his kingdom would be one that would never be destroyed. That's Jesus, God's chosen king.

- † Jesus spoke of his glorification as if it had already occurred, because it was so certain. The approach of the Gentiles back in 12.23 had signaled to him that the hour had come for his glory, and Judas going to betray him sets in motion the events that will bring this glorification about.
 - In the event of his sacrificial death, resurrection, and ascension to Heaven, Jesus would be glorified by fulfilling perfect obedience to God the Father, fulfilling his mission, attaining honor from God the Father and earning honor from all the universe, powerfully saving people, defeating evil, and returning to his glorious position in Heaven.
 - All this would glorify God the Father, who had sent the Son to minister in his name, and the Father would honor the Son for doing so.
- † The apostles cannot follow Jesus into death or into Heaven at this time, though in time these eleven would die for Jesus and come to personal glory in Heaven as faithful servants of their Lord.

[Slide 12: 13.34-35] John 13.34-35: [Jesus still speaking] “I give you a new commandment– to love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. Everyone will know by this that you are my disciples– if you have love for one another.”

- † Earlier in this chapter, John told us that it was because Jesus knew about the corruption of Judas, because he knew his identity as the Son of God, because he knew he was about to die and return to Heaven, and because he knew he had authority and honor from God the Father that he got up and washed the apostles’ feet to teach them something about love.
 - Here John shows us the same pattern with actions: We see Jesus acknowledge the corruption of Judas, which he knew would cause his crucifixion, which he knew would cause his glorification from the Father, which becomes the reason he starts teaching the apostles about love. Again we see Jesus allocating precious minutes on his last day of life to teach them something important.
- † Love is important, but loving each other is not a new commandment, is it?
 - Going back to the Law of Moses, we have **Leviticus 19.18 NET: “you must love your neighbor as yourself. I am the LORD [Yahweh].”**
 - In Jesus’ own words, we have **Matthew 22.39 NET: “Love your neighbor as yourself.”**
- † **[Slide 13: like Jesus]** But Jesus says they should love one another just as he has loved them. V.34 is all one sentence in the Greek text, so you get a better sense of this: **“I am giving you a new commandment, that you should love one another, that just as I have loved you, you also should love one another.”**
 - This is love that reflects the love and unity between the Father and the Son, and the love they have for us. This is love that reflects our New Covenant experience by which we can be transformed by the Holy Spirit to have the character of Christ and learn to love as he did.
 - This is love that shows us the depth of our sin, because we struggle to love this way and that realization helps us realize how amazing it is that Jesus loves us this way despite our sinfulness. Like the apostle John, we can marvel that we are disciples Jesus loves.
 - Remember, this conversation is coming just after Jesus washed their feet and discussed the need for them to humbly and sacrificially serve each other, even be willing to die for each other.

- So now he is saying that just as he loved them – through humble service, through meeting their needs, through teaching them truth, through sacrificing for them, even through dying for them – thus should they learn to love one another.
 - And because he washed Judas’ feet even while knowing Judas was about to betray him, we can add the characteristic “unconditionally” to this love. Christ knows what sins you will yet commit in life, but he chose to love you – to serve you, meet your needs, teach you truth, sacrifice for you, and even die for you – despite the mini-betrayals he knew you would commit. He has loved them – he has loved you – humbly, sacrificially, and unconditionally, and he expects his followers to do the same for each other.
- † What would that look like? Scripture tells us, doesn’t it? This kind of love means we give up some money, some consumer goods, so the poor can be blessed. It means we give up some time, some leisure, so we can help one another. It means we become devoted to learning each other’s needs and then meeting them. It means we are willing to work at learning and sharing God’s truth, so we can comfort, encourage, teach, admonish, and mentor others in the church.
- Think of the community we could have if everyone was intentional about loving each other the way Jesus loves us! Not even just willing, but intentional! We would bring meals to the sick, visit those stuck in care facilities, offer rides to those without a car, pray for each other daily, speak encouragement into each other’s lives, work together to raise up our children and youth, patiently teach each other, help the elderly with chores around the house, invite each other for a meal and conversation.
 - We would patiently preserve unity and protect each other’s feelings, freely forgiving each other’s momentary lapses, accepting each person where they are at, enthusiastically greeting each other and making each other feel loved. We would find ways to be kind to each other, spurring one another on to amazing acts of love.
- † **[Slide 14: known]** If we lived like this in this church, do you think it would be attractive to those outside? Would people then see the attraction of church, of participating in a community of believers? Would they see the reality of Jesus, because we reflected his love, we represented him well, and we gave evidence that he is real through our changed nature?
- Jesus says, **“By this – if you would have love for one another – all will know that you are my disciples.”**
 - Tertullian, writing a century later than John, said the pagans of his day marveled at the love of Christians in fellowship, especially under the pressure of persecution. “See how they love one another!” he wrote, “... how they are ready even to die for one another!” [Apology 39.7].
 - If we do not live like this – if we do not reflect Christ’s love – we are not really his disciples, are we? We might be believers, saved by grace, but we are not following him, not really. If we do not try to live like this, I am not sure I see the point of having a church.

Conclusion

- † LeeAnn and I have been involved in small groups for sixteen years. Sometimes it can be frustrating, because people don’t naturally know how to love the way Jesus loved. But small groups are a great place to learn how to love, to see it modeled, to experience it from others, to practice and grow.

- And when it works, it is amazing. It is one of the best experiences in life to take part in the kind of fellowship, the kind of community, that God designed for us, that God designed us to have.
- When small group works, people heal emotionally; they heal and grow relationally. Unconditional love and acceptance builds their self-esteem and confidence, it gives them freedom from fear and intimidation, it allows them to experience transformation, to blossom like a flower or transform into a butterfly.
- And the best part is that, by immersing yourself in Christian fellowship, not only do you get to receive all the one-another aspects of biblical, godly, love, you get to be Christ's agent in sharing those aspects of love and witnessing the powerful effect that love has on others. Christ will show his love to others through you!

† We cannot serve and love each other unless we spend time with each other.

- I desire to see all of us attending a group most of the year, so we can be in intimate community with each other, praying for each other, encouraging each other, doing all those one another verses with each other, so we can be more intentional about showing love to each other.
- Please see me if you are interested in learning how to lead a small group or you are willing to host a small group in your home.
- I also desire that we would change our approach about coming to church, that we would aim to come early before the service as well as hang out after the service, to socialize, and to learn together in the development classes.
- A third initiative is to be more intentional about inviting each other over or out together to build relationships. To help facilitate this, we are starting a supper club. If you sign up, what will happen is each month you will invite someone to your house for supper and someone will invite you; and each month you will get to know two sets of different people.
- Please pray about these things this week. Let's start right now...