

The King Who Washes Feet
John 13:1-17
May 10th, 2026

1. The highest went the _____. (13:1-5)
2. The dirty were made _____. (13:6-11)
3. We should _____ as He did because of _____ He did.
(13:12-17)
4. Applying the Word
To serve like Jesus...
We must be _____ by Jesus.
We must look for _____.
We must see no task as _____ us.

Questions for Discussion/Reflection on John 13:1-17

1. How do verses 1-3 set up the contrast between the heights of Jesus' nature and His humble service?
2. Read the following passages about the work of Satan to influence people. How does that fit with the description in v. 2?
 - a. Eph. 4:26-27; Act 5:3; 1 Chron. 21:1; John 12:4-6; 13:27
3. Can you think of any modern parallels to the lowliness of washing someone's feet?
4. How does Phil. 2:5-11 describe the humility of Christ?
5. What explains Peter's strong aversion to Jesus' washing His feet? What does Peter get right – what might motivate his response? What does he get wrong?
6. What theological truths about “cleansing” can we observe from vv. 7-11?
7. How can we effectively and regularly “wash our feet” by confessing sin? Why is it important to keep in mind that we are still “completely clean”?
8. How should it affect us to believe that Jesus is teacher AND Lord? What are some ways that Christians practically downplay one or the other of those titles for Jesus?
9. What are 3-5 practical ways you can serve like Jesus this week?
10. Why is the idea that we are blessed/happy if we do these things important for us to remember? How is it contrary to the way people often view service? Can you think of ways that you have experienced this blessedness/happiness from service?

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Big idea: Jesus washed feet to teach about spiritual cleansing and to model lowly service.

Intro

Let's start at the end today – read the last verse in the section.

¹⁷ "If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them.

Blessed: of persons characterized by transcendent happiness or joy, blessed, happy

Do you want joy? Do you want tremendous, transcendent joy?

I could ask you to raise your hand if you want that, but how could you not raise your hand? "No, I want to be miserable. I prefer it actually."

There's something you need to know.

There's something you need to do.

It's a passage that is both theological and practical.

Theologically, it tells us something about being saved, cleansed, forgiven, justified.

Practically, it tells us something about serving.

1. The highest went the **lowest**. (13:1-5)
 - a. Verses 1-3 make verses 4-5 shocking.
 - i. They show us how high Jesus is before showing us how low He stooped to serve.
 - b. Before the Feast of the Passover
 - i. There is some debate over the timing of this event and the timing of the Passover, but the most widely accepted and straight forward way to take it is that this is Thursday evening, the day before the cross.
 - c. Jesus knew His identity and mission and He loved His disciples to the end.
 - i. Knew that His hour had come
 1. Ticking down to the cross
 2. Knew He would depart out of this world to the Father
 - ii. Knew that Judas was betraying Him in a satanic plot
 1. Not that Judas is merely a pawn, rather he wills what the devil wills, he is doing what he wants and has intended to do (John 12:4)
 - iii. Knew that the Father had given all things into His hands
 1. All things – all power, all authority, all creation. He is the ultimate king. He has first place in everything. There is no one higher, no one greater.
 - iv. Knew that He had come forth from God and was going back to God
 - v. These phrases are piled up to reinforce the point that He has the highest rank imaginable.
 - d. He loved them to the end – He loved His own, His disciples to the end.
 - i. Do you see Jesus' love for you like this?

- ii. Before this is a passage about what we should do, it's a passage about what Jesus did for us – see how He loved us!
- e. Foot washing was an act of hospitality but it was the lowliest of jobs.
 - i. Usually reserved for the lowliest of menial servants. Some Jews insisted that Jewish slaves should not be required to wash the feet of others, this job should be reserved for gentile slaves.
 - ii. Homes are divided into shoes off or shoes on homes.
 - 1. Japan – shoes off – I stopped by the home of a Japanese international student years ago and he invited me inside. I didn't think to take off my shoes and he was gracious but clearly bothered.
 - 2. American homes – divided
 - iii. Customary in Israel to wash the feet of guests when they came inside from a journey through dirty streets.
 - iv. If you take off your socks and shoes when you get home and look at your feet, they probably won't seem that dirty, but maybe still a little gross to consider washing someone else's feet. But if you put on some Chacos or Birkenstocks, and then hike up the dirt trail up city creek and then go walk around the fairgrounds near the cattle stalls, and then through an alley in old town, and then do some gardening – so your feet are hot and sweaty and the dirt adhered to your skin, that would be different and closer to the experience.
- f. Jesus was one who served.
 - i. **Luke 22:27** "For who is greater, the one who reclines *at the table* or the one who serves? Is it not the one who reclines *at the table*? But I am among you as the one who serves.
 - ii. **Philippians 2:6-7** 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.
 - 1. He did not cease to be God but He did take on true humanity, taking on the very form of a servant – the very essence of a servant.

2. The dirty were made **clean**. (13:6-11)

- a. As usual, Peter makes a scene but it's well intentioned and serves as a teachable moment.
- b. "Lord, do You wash my feet."
 - i. The wording of it emphasizes the shock –
 - ii. Yes, are YOU going to wash MY feet?!
 - iii. It will make sense later – not after the washing but after the cross – the supreme act of service that provides true cleansing, not from dirty feet but from dirty hearts.
 - iv. Peter's response is even stronger – no way/never shall you wash my feet!
 - v. Peter objects but Jesus' response shows that there is a theological depth to this action, not merely an example to follow.
- c. "If I do not wash you, you have no part with Me."
 - i. Once again in John, someone takes the words of Jesus literally when He means it figuratively – wash my hands and feet also!

1. i.e. John 4 – living water
- ii. He who has bathed needs only to wash his feet but is completely clean
 1. Completely – totality, entirely
 2. You are clean, but not all of you – Judas.
- d. Summarizing
 - i. “If I do not wash you, you have no part of me” – We must be completely cleansed by Jesus.
 1. His blood cleanses us from all sin (1 John 1:7) – justification – the small act of washing their feet pointed ahead to the greater act of self-sacrifice on the cross that is much costlier and much more humiliating.
 2. If He washes us, we are completely clean.
 - a. That is such good news.
 - b. We are completely clean when we trust in Jesus.
 - c. The old hymn, “Are you washed in the blood?”
 - i. Have you been to Jesus for the cleansing pow'r? Are you washed in the blood of the Lamb?
 - ii. “He who has bathed needs only to wash His feet” – The justified, cleansed believer should regularly confess sin from “walking” in the contamination of sin
 1. The act of washing only the feet points to the ongoing cleansing for those who are already clean – He isn’t giving them a bath.
 - a. You really are completely clean.
 2. **1 John 1:9-10** If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. ¹⁰ If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar and His word is not in us.
 3. When should you confess sin to God?
 - a. To confess is just to say the same thing about it that God says, to acknowledge sin, to admit sin.
 - b. Spontaneously - As soon as you realize it
 - c. Regularly – At the end of the day, is there anything you are aware of that is unconfessed?
 - d. When you read the word, does anything convict you? Confess it.
 - iii. “Not all of you” – Judas was not believing/trusting, he was not justified and no external rite of foot washing changed that.
 1. Judas was not clean but the eleven were clean – they believed in Jesus, they have eternal life, they are saved, they are His sheep and He will never lose them.
3. We should **do** as He did because of **what** He did. (13:12-17)
 - a. After He returned to the table, He taught.
 - i. He reclined at the table – laying down on his side, next to a low table, propped up on one elbow.
 - b. He is Teacher and Lord

- i. He doesn't down play that by serving – servant leadership is still leadership.
- ii. Don't miss that He is our teacher and Lord.
 - 1. We should submit our minds to His truth.
 - 2. In this section it isn't just life coaching counsel. You can find that on Instagram and TikTok. You can find lots of people telling you how to live – just eat a carnivore diet, just eat a vegan diet, just sleep more, just sleep less, follow this kettlebell workout, parent in this way, etc.
 - 3. Jesus isn't one more life coach – He's teacher and Lord.
 - 4. When He says to do something, and we're convinced it's Him that says to do it in the Word, not someone's interpretation of it that is incorrect or someone else putting words into Jesus' mouth, but actually what He taught – then as His disciples who follow Him as Lord, we do it.
- c. We should wash one another's feet; we should do as He did.
 - i. I don't think that requires a wooden application where we take a bowl and a towel at small group and wash each others' feet. I think the small groups would get real small.
 - ii. Rather, we should serve each other because He served us.
 - 1. He did far more than wash our feet, He washed our sins away.
 - 2. It was stooping far lower than a servant. He stooped down from heaven.
 - 3. His service models and motivates our service.
 - a. **Ephesians 4:32** Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you.
 - b. **Ephesians 5:1-2** Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children; ² and walk in love, just as Christ also loved you and gave Himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God as a fragrant aroma.
 - iii. The “one another” language gives primary emphasis to those within the church, even though we of course should serve those outside the body of Christ also.
 - 1. **Galatians 6:10** So then, while we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, and especially to those who are of the household of the faith.
- d. It would be good to brainstorm what this looks like in your life.
 - i. I can give examples but they might not fit your situation.
 - ii. At home, do you look for ways to help or do you expect others to wash the dishes, vacuum, clean up, pull weeds? When there is work to be done, do you hold back hoping someone else takes it?
 - iii. At church, do you contribute or only consume?
 - 1. Do you show hospitality in your home? That takes sacrifice – planning, cleaning, invading your space.
 - 2. Do you befriend the person that's more challenging or lonely? Or do you talk to the same close friends every Sunday?
 - iv. 26 years ago, in the summer of 2000, I worked at a summer camp in Eugene, Oregon. Near the end of the summer the camp directors started pulling camp workers aside, calling them to a grassy area on the other side of one of the buildings. We didn't know what to expect,

but when we arrived there were comfortable chairs in the shade and buckets of water, and they directors washed out feet – which were pretty grimy from wearing sandals at summer camp. As they did so, they talked to us about how the summer was going, how they could pray for us, encouraged us about things they noticed in our lives.

1. Was it awkward? Yes. What is significant? Well, I'm talking about it 26 years later. Yes. It was an act of intentional kindness and service.

- e. Truly, truly, I say to you, a slave is not greater than his master (v. 16)
 - i. If He served, we should serve.
 - ii. What if someone doesn't appreciate it? Do you think people always appreciate what Jesus did? Do we always appreciate what God does for us?
 - iii. The highest went the lowest, so nothing is below us.
- f. If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them. (v. 17)
 - i. Not, "If you acknowledge these things to be true" or "take notes about these things" or "finds ways your husband should do this"
 - ii. But "if you do them"
 - iii. It's easier to affirm this in the abstract than practice it in reality. We can always find reasons why THESE are not the people I'm supposed to serve IN THIS WAY.
 1. Service, yes, but cleaning the bathroom at my house, that's my sister's job. I'm too tired to make dinner. I already volunteered with this ministry, I'm not going to do that ministry.
 2. And the truth is, sometimes we do need to guard our time or allow others to serve or help our kids see they need to fulfill their responsibilities. However, we need to watch the temptation to explain away every opportunity to serve.
 - iv. What would your home, small group, church, friendships
 - v. Carson – There is a form of religious piety that utters a hearty 'amen!' to the most stringent demands of discipleship, but which rarely does anything about them.

4. Applying the Word

- a. To serve like Jesus...
 - i. We must be **washed** by Jesus.
 - ii. We must look for **opportunities**.
 - iii. We must see no task as **beneath** us.
- b. John Piper: Because Jesus went low, and because going low is the path of joy and because you are completely clean, don't exalt yourself, but go low in humble service.
 - i. Pastors, go low. Elders, go low. Heads of households, go low. Small group leaders, go low. Presidents of companies, owners, supervisors, managers, go low. Mom and dad, go low. Big brothers and sisters, go low. "A" students, go low. Good athletes, go low. Pretty teenage girls, go low to serve. Christian, go low to represent your Savior, to know his joy, and because you are completely clean.

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