

Jesus Washes His Disciples' Feet
Pastor Ty Blackburn
John 13:1-17
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As Kim said, it is a blessing to have Amelia home from The Master's College. She is about to begin her senior year this year. We love having her home to minister to us, and just to be here in fellowship with her. Her love for Christ is such a blessing. Maria, thank you for playing for us, and Kim, thank you for leading worship. Ted and Jen, Ted and Jennifer Guthrie normally lead our worship. They are at a family reunion along with the Guthrie family, so Todd and Kimberly as well. It was such a blessing to have so many gifted people to serve the Lord, and help us to worship Him.

I'd like to ask all of you to turn with me in your Bibles to John 13. The last couple of weeks we've heard from two of our missionaries. Two weeks ago Wayne Mack preached, and of course Dr. Mack and Carol are now back in South Africa. I'm already missing them. Then last week, Jim Dowdy preached for us, a missionary to Mexico City, and Jim and Carolyn are with us again today to worship with us. What a blessing that message was, a challenge on the Gospel. The Missions Conference we had last weekend was such an extraordinary expression of God's kindness to us. The challenge we received, and the blessing and encouragement that we received from His word, I'm so grateful for that.

Actually, three weeks before that, the last two Sundays, I was preaching some topical messages which we joked after I preached, I'm going to have to immediately confess that I preached a topical message, and turn from that, go back to expository preaching. But no not seriously, seriously we believe that expository preaching is the way that God intends His church to be fed. There is a power about working through the books of the Bible consecutively. One of the things that it does is it forces you to deal with everything in the Scripture, and so the Lord is continually setting the agenda for the sermon. So that is the basic diet of the church at Providence. We believe that's where the Lord has us, and occasionally though, you can put some seasoning on that meal of some topical preaching. So some salt and pepper so to speak.

Anyway, today we return to the exposition of the Gospel of John, to the 13th chapter, and we begin in the 13th chapter a section of Scripture, a section of John's Gospel, Chapters 13-17. These five chapters are called '*The Farewell Discourse*', in which Jesus gives final instructions, and final words of comfort as He prepares

His disciples for His death and after His resurrection and ascension, His departure. So there really is a sense in which He is giving sort of a last will and testament. When He is with the Father, after His glorious resurrection and ascension, they are going to be alone, and so He is preparing them for the mission He is sending them on. So these five chapters are the summation of all that is on the Savior's heart the night before He is crucified. Interesting in the providence of God, that John alone gives us this window into our Savior's heart. The other Gospel-writers were there. I mean, Peter, we have Mark's Gospel from Peter, and so he didn't mention this, Matthew didn't mention this, or didn't spend much time on it, but in the providence of God, the Lord gave us in John's Gospel this full explication of the Savior's heart.

At the beginning of this discourse, this time of *'Farewell Discourse'*, final instructions, words of comfort, what we have is one stunning act, one enacted sermon as it were, that before we have any words of Jesus... I mean, what has happened in John, after Chapter 12, and we saw this the last time we were in John 12, we noted that this is the end of Jesus' public ministry. That from this point forward it will be a private ministry to the disciples. So we've moved from the public ministry to the private ministry. "Now, here is what I need to say to you, My chosen disciples, My chosen apostles. Here is My heart for you." What we have is that before He says a word, He does something, and what He does is striking, is surprising, and in many ways for the disciples that first night, and for all the readers who read this Gospel for the first time, in the 1st Century, the act that Jesus does is nothing less than shocking. But it is this act that is the deliberate, as we see, as we read the text in a moment, it is a deliberate, premeditated, powerful, poignant moment that Jesus is seeking to impress something on His disciples.

It is quite interesting that, as I said, the act is itself a message, and this is in keeping with the way John has recorded for us so much of Jesus' life and ministry. If you think about the way John has organized his Gospel, we've seen in the first 12 chapters that the first section of John is organized around seven signs that Jesus did. These were seven miracles. Now He did numbers of miracles. As John says, "If they were all written down, books wouldn't hold them, but I've chosen these signs so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God, and believing you may have life in His name. That's the purpose, I wrote this Gospel was to show you the signs Jesus did." *'Sign'*, the word that he uses throughout the first 12 chapters is an event, an act that signifies something beyond the act itself. So the seven signs—He turned water into wine, He healed the nobleman's son with a word from a distance, He healed the lame man at the Pool of Bethesda, He fed 5,000 men, in addition women and children with a few barley

loaves and fish, He walked on water, He healed a man born blind, He raised Lazarus from the dead. And each one of these was not just a miracle in itself that blessed the recipients, it was something that told us something radical about who Jesus is. It pointed to Him in a way that made it a sign. It signified something, it symbolized something.

I mean, the first one, He turned water into wine. That was signifying that He is the one who brings joy. He is the Messiah prophesied in Isaiah 25 that would bring in the era of joy. He fed the 5,000, probably upwards of 20,000 people counting women and children, with five barley loaves and two fish, signifying that He is the bread of life, that He is the true bread, that Moses didn't give us bread, that the true bread is Jesus. He raised Lazarus from the dead to show that He is the resurrection and the life. And in a similar way, though it's not a sign, it's not a miracle in a sense, it is an enacted message just like these others, this great act of Jesus is in itself a sermon, it is a message. Before He says anything to His disciples, He wants them to behold what He does before they listen to what He says. Let's read John 13:1-17.

John 13:1-17 ~ Now before the festival of the Passover, Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart from this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end. 2 The devil had already put it into the heart of Judas son of Simon Iscariot to betray him. And during supper 3 Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come from God and was going to God, 4 got up from the table, took off his outer robe, and tied a towel around himself. 5 Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel that was tied around him. 6 He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, "Lord, are you going to wash my feet?" 7 Jesus answered, "You do not know now what I am doing, but later you will understand." 8 Peter said to him, "You will never wash my feet." Jesus answered, "Unless I 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, "One who has bathed does not need to wash, except for the feet, but is entirely clean. And you are clean, though not all of you." 11 For he knew who was to betray him; for this reason he said, "Not all of you are clean."

12 After he had washed their feet, had put on his robe, and had returned to the table, he said to them, "Do you know what I have done to you? 13 You call me Teacher and Lord—and you are right, for that is

what I am. 14 So if I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. 15 For I have set you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you. 16 Very truly, I tell you, servants are not greater than their master, nor are messengers greater than the one who sent them. 17 If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them.

Let's pray together.

Our Father, we ask that You might give us eyes to see, ears to hear, that by Your Spirit You might open for us Your word, and let us behold the glory of the Son of God. And we pray this in His name, Amen.

What we have is a message that is enacted. Jesus is saying something incredibly powerful and striking. He is making an imprint on the hearts of the disciples that He intends to mark the rest of their lives, but especially to even impact them for the entire evening, that they would come back to this again. What is going on? Why did He do that? Now for us to understand this clearly, what I want us to do is break down our thoughts this morning under three points. We are going to first of all look at what Jesus does, and we're going to see what Jesus does. The second point is why He does it. And the third point is, how do you respond? What Jesus does, why He does it, and how do you respond?

1) What Jesus Does:

When we come to the first point now, what Jesus does, I want to encourage you to seek to behold what Jesus does. The apostle wants his readers to see this picture. John is intent upon us seeing what happens before. He wants us to see what he saw and he wants then, us to feel what he felt. Now when we come to a passage like this, when we come to Scripture, there is always a wisdom about trying to lay aside familiarity with the passage. You know we've read a passage a number of times, we've heard messages on it before, and so we come to it thinking, "Yeah, I already know about this." This is something we should do in our Bible-reading, we should try to ask God to help us feel the force of it. "Don't let familiarity, Lord, obscure anything that You have to say to me." So we should come trying to lay aside the familiarity. There are three things I want you to do before we get into the message itself. The first thing, try to lay aside your familiarity. The second thing, try to see in your mind's eye what the Scripture calls us to see. This text is intended to make us see something.

In fact, let me just show you how I think that is so clear that this is the intent of the Scripture of this passage. John's use of the dramatic present is just evident in the entire description of the foot-washing. The dramatic present, now let me explain what that is. What happens is when you are telling something in past time, sometimes an author, or a speaker will employ the dramatic present. That is if I am telling you, "Hey, I went to the store yesterday and I bought some spice for Patti." She needed something, she was cooking, she needed a spice, and let's say it was oregano. This is a boring story already. I'm getting bored by it, but why would I be telling you about this? But if I were, and somehow you were interested in it, I said, "I went to the store yesterday and I bought some oregano." That's one way of telling the story. Or I could say, "I went to the store yesterday and I'm walking down the aisle." Do you see that? I went to the present tense. Do you see that? It happened yesterday. "I'm walking down the aisle and I see the spice rack and I hear behind me..." You see all that present tense? What happened is you are brought into the story in a way that makes you experience what is going on. John uses the dramatic present eight times in seven verses, twice in Verse 4.

This is one of the things I love about the New American Standard translation that I'm looking at right here, and I'm preaching from. One of the reason that I preach from it is because they clue you in on this. If you have the New American Standard, you would see on Verse 4 where it says '*got up*', there is a little star beside '*got up*'. Some of you have that, do you see that? Okay, and then '*laid aside*', there is another little star there. And then Verse 5 '*poured*', there is another little star there. That is telling you that those verses, that those words are being translated as past tense because that is sort of the way we speak, but in reality it is dramatic present. Now I don't know why they just don't, I would like it better if they just went ahead and put it in the dramatic present, but at least they are cluing you in. So when you see that little star, remember that is what it is. So what I'm saying, this is how John tells a story. After he introduces the story, I mean, introduces the setting, he sets the setting for us, he tells us it is the Feast of the Passover. They are going to have the meal. It is before the Passover meal, before they've started eating. So what is going on here is they are in the upper room. The way they ate in the 1st Century, they didn't eat at tall tables with chairs around them, they ate at low tables and they sat around the table, and kind of reined over on an arm sometimes. Their feet were away from the table for obvious reasons. You know we, by sitting up, we keep our feet a good ways from the table, don't we? So they are fanned out around the table like this, and they are about to eat. That is the first thing John says, Verse 1:

John 13:1 ~ Now before the Feast of the Passover,...

2) What Jesus Knows:

A) His Death is Imminent:

So you see what is set before you. Then he tells us what Jesus knows, and Jesus knows four things here. He knows His hour has come, that His death is imminent, He knows that His death is right before Him. This is something that had weighed heavily on Him, and is weighing heavily on him. We know this from Chapter 12 when He realizes that the hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified, in John 12:23. Remember Gentiles come up to Him? Gentiles come wanting to see Jesus and when they come and tell Jesus He doesn't say anything about those guys, His first statement is: "Now is the hour for the Son of man to be glorified. This is the cue the Father told me when the Gentiles begin coming, that is the time for the Son of man to be glorified. My cross is right now," and He begins talking about His death. Then it shows right after that He is deeply troubled in His spirit because He understands that the death that He's going to die is not just an agonizing physical death, it is that, it is an incredibly agonizing physical death, but it is also a spiritual death. That He will become sin for us, that He will have our sins imputed to Him, and will experience the fullness of the wrath of God on the cross. So when John says in Chapter 13:1, *...knowing that His hour had come...* he is wanting us to remember all of that. Jesus, fully aware that His death is right at hand, that's the first thing He knows. The emphasis is on 'knowing', *...Now before the Feast of the Passover, Jesus knowing...* Verse 1. Look at Verse 3, *...Jesus, knowing that the Father had given...* The emphasis in these first three verses is on what Jesus knows.

B) His Betrayer is Present:

The second thing He knows is He knows that His betrayer is present and that the satanic plot is coming to fruition. He knows that Satan and Judas are right there to destroy Him. Verse 2:

John 13:2 ~ During supper, the devil having already put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon, to betray Him,

He knows that he is the betrayer. It becomes clear as the narrative unfolds.

C) He Has All Authority:

Thirdly, He knows the Father has given all things into His hand, Verse 3. That is, He has all authority. Jesus, knowing that His death is imminent, that this horrible, awful, agonizing, spiritual death, and physical death of the cross is right here before Him, knowing that His enemy is seated at the table with Him, and that Satan is orchestrating this awful evil against Him, and knowing that God has given all things into His hand, that He has all authority in His hand right then. And knowing that He had come forth from God, and was going back to God, knowing His authority, He has all things in His hand, knowing His position that He is Himself God, John says, “Now, do you see? This is the setting. They are seated around the table, and this is what Jesus knows.

3) What Does Jesus Do?

Now, with that in mind, behold what Jesus does. What does He do?” He got up, would read better He gets up from supper, and He lays aside His garments. John has introduced this, and he says, He gets up from supper. Everybody is lying, reclining on the ground, ready to eat the meal, and Jesus gets up. What is He getting up for? He lays aside His garments, He goes to the linen undergarment that He’s wearing. Basically, He has taken off His robe of honor, and He is clothed as a household servant. He lays aside His garment, and taking a towel He girded Himself. He wraps a towel around Himself. The disciples must have been just stunned. “What’s going on?” You know at first, “Did we forget something on the table? Why is He getting up? Why is He taking off His garment? What is He girding Himself with a towel for?” He pours water into the basin. They watch Him pouring the water. John wants you to see the water being poured into the basin. Here He is pouring the water into the basin, and then He began to wash the disciples’ feet, and to wipe them with the towel with which He is girded. This is beyond surprising. This is shocking and it is hard for us to understand that because we are not immersed in 1st Century culture. But for the 1st Century readers even, I mean, for the disciples themselves, this was shocking. I think for every Jew, and proselyte, and Gentile who read this for the first time, or heard these words read for the first time, they found it shocking. I mean, they were hearing a sermon about Jesus, “We’re coming to hear about the Messiah, the Son of God,” and to hear this story for the first time would have left them stunned. I mean, 1st Century culture, Greek and Jewish, what we have before us is a massive breach of etiquette. This is a stunning assault on decorum. In Greek culture, only the lowliest, menial slave was ever assigned to wash feet. See you have a household of slaves, the lowest slave was the only one who would ever wash feet, and it was understood, “You

don't ask any of the other guys to wash feet." I mean, if he is gone, or he is out of commission, then it is the next lowest. It doesn't come up past that. The lowest guy who is functioning in the house washes the feet.

In Jewish culture it was the same way, only the lowest slave, many Jews in the rabbinic writings argued that for a Jewish household that had slaves, they should never ask, listen to this, they should never ask a Jewish slave to wash feet. Only the Gentile, only the dirty, Gentile slave should wash feet. In fact, in the 1st Century culture, another interesting practice was that... You know Jesus is having a meal with His disciples. He is the rabbi, He is the teacher, and in Jewish culture, and Greek culture, you had this idea of excellent, we were talking about this with the sermon last week, the disciples are people who are learners, who attached themselves to their master, and they learned from Him. They followed Him, they basically do whatever He says to do as they are going about learning from Him. They are to do whatever He asks them to do if they want to be a disciple, those are the terms, except for one thing. One thing a teacher cannot ask his disciple to do is to wash his feet. That is too low. They may be lowly disciples, but they are not that low. You can't make them wash your feet. And with all that in mind, Jesus does the unthinkable. It is not that He asked them to wash His feet, which honestly, with their understanding of who He was, they probably would have gladly done that. But He stands convention on its head and He, knowing all that He knows about who He is and what He faces, He washes theirs. This was too much for them to take. I mean, I can imagine that the apostles, the disciples are all just absolutely stunned by what is transpiring. And as is often the case, the only one that can bring himself to say anything, but say what all of them feel, is Peter, and the incredulous reply that he makes to Jesus. Jesus (Verse 6) comes... There it is again, the dramatic present:

John 13:6 ~ So He *came to Simon Peter. He *said to Him, "Lord, do You wash my feet?"

And in the Greek, it's so emphatic. "Lord, do You *yourself* wash my feet? Lord, do You wash *my* feet?"

John 13:7 ~ Jesus answered and said to him, "What I do you do not realize now, but you will understand hereafter." & Peter *said to Him, "Never shall You wash my feet!"

It's so emphatic in the original. The idea is, "By no means *never*." That's the force. "By no means *never* shall You wash my feet." It's unthinkable. Remember how Peter responded when he first met Jesus? "Depart from me. I'm a sinful man." He sees himself in relation to Christ, and he knows, "There's no way that You as the Son of God can stoop to wash my feet. By no means *never*!" And we learn something here. The Lord has a way of busting our boxes and our expectations, and we need to learn as followers of Jesus to never say, "Lord, no," or, "Lord, by no means," or, "Lord, by no means never." Do you see what an oxymoron that is? "Lord, no. Lord, by no means. Lord, never." The idea is whatever He says is right, and I don't have to understand it. I just have to obey it.

Now, we can understand Peter's failure here, and like I said, we would have done the same thing. All the other disciples were thinking the same thing. He just voiced what they thought, because this was so outlandish. This was really scandalous. Now, having beheld what He does, the question is: Why is He doing it? That's the second question.

4) Why Does Jesus Do It?

I think there are a number of reasons, and this is like a diamond where we're going to look at one facet today, and I think we'll have to come back next week, Lord willing, and look at another facet. A couple of things are stated in the text. One is that this is a visible demonstration of His love, Verse 1. I think that phrase, "...having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end," part of what's going on is He's demonstrating what love is. We're going to look at that more next time, though. That's one of the things that's going on. And you see that also in Verse 15, He says, "I gave you an example that you should follow." This has application to the way we live with each other. There is a strong application to how we're to treat one another.

So those are two of the things that are going on here, but I want to talk about, I think, the most emphatic in the passage, and especially given the timing of it, and that is the reason He does this is not only to show us about love and to show us an example, but it is to explain His death. He is before it happens explaining why He has to die. He is before it happens explaining, and in one sense this confirms the fact that Jesus had come from the glory of heaven always to go to the cross. It wasn't an accident of history. Sometimes people act like that. They think that. *What a tragedy*. And what's a tragedy? Humanly speaking, it was an awful tragedy. It was wicked. The most evil act that has ever happened is the crucifixion of the Son of God, and yet it is not an accident of history.

It is that which Peter later preaches in Acts 2. It happens according to the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God. And even the foot washing proves it. Jesus does this scandalous act to say, “Listen, for you to be clean, something scandalous has to happen like this,” and He’s explaining His cross. Now, let me show you how I think that becomes clear. He does it to explain His death, and we see it in the emphasis upon the theme of washing. You observe the passage and you see that eight different times the word wash or washing is used between Verses 5 and 14.

John 13:5 ~ Then He *poured water into the basin, and began to wash the disciples’ feet and to wipe them with the towel with which He was girded. 6 So He *came to Simon Peter. He *said to Him, “Lord, do You wash my feet?”

John 13:8 ~ Peter *said to Him, “Never shall You wash my feet!” Jesus answered him, “If I do not wash you, you have no part with Me.”

Wash, wash, wash, over and over and over again. You also have the word *clean*. Three times the word *clean* is used.

John 13:10 ~ Jesus *said to him, “He who has bathed...

That’s another word, actually. You have washed, bathed, and clean. A total of twelve times these words occur.

John 13:10 ~ Jesus *said to him, “He who is bathed needs only to wash his feet, but is completely clean; and you are clean, but not all of you.”

And then John repeats it:

John 13:11 ~ For He knew the one who was betraying Him; for this reason He said, “Not all of you are clean.”

The emphasis is upon cleansing. So why He does it, I think really there are three things that are going on in this that prove that He’s explaining His death. The first is the theme of washing which I just explained. The second is the necessity of washing. We see this in Verse 8 when Peter says, “By no means *never* shall You wash my feet.”

John 13:8 ~ ... Jesus answered him, "If I do not wash you, you have no part with Me."

Now, He's clearly not talking just about the foot washing, is He? The idea would be, "If I wash your feet, you have a part with Me," literally, physically, but He washes Judas' feet, and Judas has no part with Him. You see, the foot washing is symbolic. The foot washing is symbolic of spiritual cleansing, and it becomes clear as we follow the narrative on down, when Peter then, he's always overcorrecting, you know. "By no means NEVER shall You wash my feet." "I have to wash you." "Well then don't just stop with my feet. Get my head and my hands." "No, you don't need to wash your head and your hands, Peter. If you bathe, you only need to wash your feet and you're clean, and you are clean, but not all of you," for He knew the one who was going to betray Him. That's why He said, "Not all of you are clean." This shows the necessity of spiritual cleansing.

To have a part with Jesus, He's saying, and this is what He's teaching—this is why He's teaching in such a profoundly shocking way is He's making this point and He's imprinting it on their souls. For you to be saved, you must be washed. And think about the significance also of the Passover meal. I mean, they're sitting down at a table with the Son of God. They're having a meal. It's not only any meal. This didn't happen sometime when they were just eating on a Tuesday or a Monday and they were having some meal. No, it happened at the Passover feast, and that's because of the proximity of His death, but it's also significant. The reason His death happens at Passover is because Passover is so important. It is the key to unlocking, in a sense, the interpretation of the whole of the plan of salvation.

How do you come to dwell in God's land, the land of Canaan? How does that happen? God's teaching in the Old Testament through the history of the people of Israel, and He shows that for you to come and dwell in God's land, He must deliver you by His mighty hand from the bondage of Egypt. Do you see that? They were enslaved in darkness, spiritual darkness. They were in bondage, and so God sends Moses a deliverer and He delivers them through the Passover lamb. And by that great deliverance, the blood upon them, they're brought out into fellowship with the living God. The Passover meal commemorates that, and it's the treasured part, the most important of all the feasts, and the time where they celebrate who they are as a people. The nation of Israel would do this because that was typifying the reality of what it means to be a part of the true Israel of God, the one who has been spiritually purchased and delivered. So the Passover meal, though, has all that significance.

So they're sitting down for a Passover meal, and they're sitting down with the Son of God, and there's a sense in which how is it that you can sit down at a meal, the meal of salvation, how can you sit down at the table of salvation, how can you sit down with the Son of God, and eat the meal?

In fact, I think it's significant, Luke's Gospel tells us, actually all three of the other Gospels tell us that Jesus when He's instituting the Lord's Supper, which happens here in the same evening, though John doesn't focus on that, but the others had, each of the other Gospels records that Jesus says, "I will not drink of the fruit of the vine again until I drink it with you in My kingdom." He says, "Listen, we're not going to sit down and eat at the table of salvation until the end of time, until I bring you into My presence, and then you're going to sit down with Me and we're going to eat and drink at the table of salvation."

The question is how do you get there? How do you sit down with God at the table of salvation? It's like He's been eating with them every day and He's not done this, but this moment, the salvific significance of this moment is upon Him, and He's saying basically, "Listen guys, you need to understand. I've been eating with you and drinking with you, but the reality is that for anyone to truly eat and drink with Me forever, because I am God, something must happen to you, and we can't begin eating until you guys get cleansed. And for you to be cleansed, something scandalous has to happen."

I mean, we read earlier from Ezekiel 36 that the necessity of washing is something the Bible makes very clear. In Ezekiel, remember we read He said, "I'm going to sprinkle clean water on you and you'll be clean"? He says, "You profaned My name. The nation of Israel has gone into idolatry after idolatry after idolatry, sin after sin after sin." He sends prophets and they don't turn, and He says, "Listen, what's got to happen?" In God's teaching through the history of Israel the way of salvation, what has to happen? We're so messed up that what has to happen is God's going to have to cleanse us, and to cleanse us He's got to give us a new heart. That's how lost we are, and Ezekiel makes that clear. We must be washed.

The New Testament picks this idea up with the whole regeneration motif. You have to be born again, you have to be washed (Titus 3), that God has given us salvation. The kindness of God appeared, and in His love for mankind, He's made known His salvation through the washing of regeneration. The way you come to know God is you're washed. You're reborn. You're recreated. You get a new heart and He washes you. So Jesus is teaching in a powerful way the necessity of washing, and then finally, it's the scandal of washing itself.

Why He does it is He's explaining His death by the theme of washing, the necessity of washing, and then the scandal of the washing. Essentially He's saying for you and I to be washed and to be able to sit down with God at His table forever, the most scandalous thing must happen. In Philippians 2, the apostle Paul marvels at the scandal of the cross. He says in Verse 6 of Philippians 2:

Philippians 2:6 ~ who, although He existed in the form of God, (Jesus) did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, 7 but emptied Himself,...

He laid aside His glory. He laid aside His position. He laid aside His authority.

...taking the form of a bond-servant,...

The text would be better translated as: ***...taking the form of a slave,...***

...and being made in the likeness of men. 8 Being found in appearance as a man,...

He's become a slave, but that's not far enough. Paul is basically showing us in Philippians 2 what John is showing us in John 13, that though Jesus had come forth from God, and was going back to God, behold how low He has come, and Paul is saying the same thing. "He is in Himself God, but He doesn't strain to hold onto His honor and authority as God, but He takes the form of a slave." And the descent continues in Paul's words. It's enough. How can it be that the God of Heaven would become like a human slave? How can that be? But it's even more scandalous than that, Paul says. Being made in the likeness of men:

Philippians 2:8 ~ Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death,...

He goes farther down than being a human slave. He goes down to dying as a slave. But it's still even farther than that:

...even death on a cross.

He becomes cursed for us. Galatians 3:13 says, "For cursed is everyone who hangs upon a tree." The Son of glory, the Lord of glory, comes down, all the way down, and the scandal of it is you and I are so sinful and so wretched that that is required.

Peter, in his reaction, and we in our prideful response to this, say, “This can’t be. No, You can’t do that!” What we should be saying is, “Wait a minute. Everything You do is right. You’ve never overdone anything that You’ve done.” The Lord doesn’t do too much. He does only what’s necessary. He does what is perfect and right, and to save sinners like you and me, He must come all the way down.

You know, the prophets had tried to anticipate, I mean, God’s giving them views of this, and I think one of the places you see this is certainly Isaiah 53, but if you go back a few verses to Isaiah 52, there’s a verse there that starts off this discussion of the suffering servant. Remember, this is the hour for the Son of Man to be glorified, but to be glorified, to be shown as who He truly is, to be magnified in His splendor, and His wonder, and His majesty, is ironically the moment of lowest humiliation. You see this paradox in Isaiah 52:13-14. There, the Lord through the prophet Isaiah, says:

Isaiah 52

13 Behold, My servant will prosper,...

I’m going to send My servant. The king is coming. The Priest King is coming, and when He comes, He will prosper.

***13 Behold, My servant will prosper,
He will be high and lifted up and greatly exalted.***

Look at the next verse:

***14 Just as many were astonished at you, My people,
So His appearance was marred more than any man
And His form more than the sons of men.***

He says, “Listen, just as people were *astonished* at you...” That word is a powerful word. It means to be desolate, and the idea is desolation that comes from some kind of natural disaster that is seen as an act of God, that God’s wrath and judgment have come in some natural disaster. You think about how, with the advent of cable television, we’ve all been able to see pictures of natural disasters in a way in recent years that people didn’t have before. I mean, you saw a picture, but you didn’t see a living picture of it. We’ve seen what happened in the tidal wave in Japan or the tidal waves in all of Asia some years back, 10 or 15 years ago, the devastation that comes, the desolation.

God says that when I dealt with you and I sent you into exile, what happened was you were made desolate so that the people around you, they were astonished at you. They looked at you in the misery that I had put you in, and as they looked at the desolation, as they looked at the devastation, they in themselves felt something of the wonder at the devastation. He says that is a type of what will happen when My servant comes. People will see His glory, His exaltedness, and they will marvel at the desolation:

Isaiah 52

14 *Just as many were astonished at you, My people,
So His appearance was marred more than any man
And His form more than the sons of men.*

15 *Thus He will sprinkle many nations,
Kings will shut their mouths on account of Him;*

The Son of God when He comes into the world, Isaiah is just glimpsing it through the mist of history, God inspiring him to understand just enough to help us anticipate that which is really impossible to understand until it is fully revealed. Jesus is teaching that same event by washing their feet

Now, how do you respond to that? Well, there are really two things you need to do. There are only two things that you can do or that you ought to do, and the first thing is to accept what it says about you and me. We need to accept what this says about us. We need to embrace it. This isn't just talking about people out there and all the evil in the world. This is talking about the evil in here (in our hearts) that it is so profound that I am so filthy in the sight of a holy God, like Isaiah said in Isaiah 64:6, that even my righteous deeds are filthy rags, that the disease of sin is so pervasive that no human effort could ever wash me. I mean, can a leopard change his spots? Can an Ethiopian change the color of his skin? Neither can you who are sinners make yourselves clean. Embrace what it says about you. Turn from pride and humble yourself before the living God. But not only that, not embrace only what it says about you, but embrace what it says about God.

What it says about God is that God is infinitely gracious, and merciful, and loving, and meek, that the God of Heaven who holds all the planets in their orbit, who's sovereignly reigning over all things at every moment, who is so pure and holy that He cannot look upon sin, sin cannot come into His presence, yet this God who is so holy, and so righteous, and so exalted, and so majestic is also so meek, and so

lowly, that He comes down and He saves us by serving us. It's unbelievable from a human standpoint, but marvelously and wonderfully true. This is who God is. Jesus says, "If you've seen Me, you've seen the Father." What is God like? Jesus said, "I'm meek, and lowly, and humble of heart. Come unto Me you who are weary and heavy laden. Take My yoke upon you. You've got to come and be submitted to Me. You have to come and accept My Lordship. You have to come and take My yoke upon you. You have to come and become My slave. But let Me tell you this. When you come, you will find that I am meek and lowly of heart, and that I'm gentle and loving."

You come to God, and you let Him wash you, and you come to God, and you keep realizing every day of your life as a believer when He gives you a new heart, and you begin to walk with Him, and you walk in His word, and you follow Him, because the call to become a disciple of Christ is a call for life. It's not a decision. It is a lifestyle, but it's all of grace, and you keep embracing what He says about you every day. What this says about me every day is I need a Savior every day. I'm a sheep that wanders. I forget what's most important. But just like that song we sang earlier, *when Satan tempts me to despair, and tells me of the guilt within, upward I look and see Him there, who made an end of all my sin*. The one who came down and took the role of the most lowly servant, the most lowly servant imaginable, He has washed me, and because of that, you will be clean forever. Nothing can change that.

Now why would you not follow a Savior like that? The glory of the Gospel is too wonderful almost to imagine, and yet so incredibly perfect and true. This is the only way that sinners who are sinners to the core could be saved. God is just, and the justifier of the ungodly. He remains holy. He punishes sin, but He punishes all of our sins, all of those who ever believed were punished, every sin—past, present, and future of those who believed was punished in the cross, and Jesus experienced the wrath of God. Forever there remains no more need for a sacrifice for sins. Embrace what it says about you, and embrace what it says about God, and follow Him. Give yourself to Him.

Let's go to the Lord in prayer...

Our Father, we praise You for the glory and the wonder of Your plan of salvation. We acknowledge that all of these things are to the praise of the glory of Your grace. We stand in awe of You, we worship You, and Lord, I pray that everyone in this room would be granted grace to give themselves to You, to worship You by surrendering to You, no longer holding anything back. You already know all that is

wrong with us. There is no reason to hide like Adam hid. You know it all. You know our sin, and yet You have offered Yourself to wash us and to clothe us in Your righteousness. We praise You, oh God, for the great things that You have done, and we pray this in Jesus' Name, Amen.

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