

Seeing Christ in Dirty Feet

(John 13:1-17)

(preached 4/14/19; Pine Grove BC Sun AM)

Introduction

On March 29, an English woman says that she saw Jesus' face in a soft tortilla as she prepared dinner for her family.

According to the lady named Lucy, the tortilla had not been toasted.

It came out of the pack that way.

Strangely, this is not the first time someone has claimed to see Jesus' face in a tortilla.

In 2017, a Honduran housewife discovered the face of Jesus in a tortilla she purchased at a local restaurant.

She put the tortilla in a glass, sealed the lid, and now has had 100s of visitors to her house to see what they all call a miracle.

But these are not the only stories of this phenomenon.

Jesus has appeared on a pizza, on a piece of toast, on top of a cup of coffee, and on my personal favorite, a ruffles plain potato chip...

Sadly, this is the state of Christianity today where people want to see Jesus' face and hear Jesus' voice anywhere but on the pages of Scripture...

These kind of things sicken me.

Unfortunately, some believers fall hook, line, and sinker for such nonsense...

The truth is that Jesus doesn't need to appear on a piece of toast to prove his existence.

He has proves his existence time and time again in the Bible.

Over the next two weeks, we are going to see Jesus in the dirty feet of a group of disciples..

No, it won't be a picture of him in the dirt stains on their feet.

It will be a picture of him, the King of kings acting as the lowest of low servants..

It will be a picture of God in the flesh washing the dirty flesh of men that He created.

It will be a picture of the Messiah...

The long awaited One with towel in hand serving those who were created to serve Him..

Yet, this is the picture of Jesus that He wants to impress upon the minds of his disciples.

One of service and love..

As we approach Resurrection Sunday this year, I was tempted to preach this message today and then skip ahead in the story to the resurrection which we celebrate next Sunday...

But my heart kept being pulled back to this passage.

Yes, the resurrection is the basis of our belief.

The foundation of Christianity..

But the person of the resurrection is Christ.

The One who rose from the dead.

And there may be no greater picture of Him than what we are going to see in the verses before us today and next week..

So yes, we will celebrate the resurrection next week, but we celebrate that every week as the church gathers on Sunday.

Therefore, for the next two weeks, let us celebrate the Christ of the resurrection by identifying 5 traits of Him from John 13:1-20...

I want to read this passage to us now to get us familiar with it, and then we will go back and look at all the incredible attributes of Christs that are revealed in it.

John 13:1-20...

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 [a]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 all things into His hands, and that He had come forth from God and was going back to God, 4 *got up from supper, and *laid aside His garments; and taking a towel, He girded Himself. 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?" 7 Jesus answered and said to him, "What I do you do not realize now, but you will understand hereafter." 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."

*9 Simon Peter *said to Him, “Lord, then wash not only my feet, but also my hands and my head.” 10 Jesus *said to him, “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 have done to you? 13 You call Me Teacher and Lord; and [b]you are right, for so I am. 14 If I then, the Lord and the 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. 18 I do not speak of all of you. I know the ones I have chosen; but it is that the Scripture may be fulfilled, ‘He who eats My bread has lifted up his heel against Me.’ 19 From now on I am telling you before it comes to pass, so that when it does occur, you may believe that I am He. 20 Truly, truly, I say to you, he who receives whomever I send receives Me; and he who receives Me receives Him who sent Me.”

As we come turn the page to John 13, we have also turned the page to the final hours of Jesus’ life.

It is now Thursday evening.

In less than 24 hours, Jesus will be dead and laid in a tomb, having died at the hands of the Jews and Romans on a cross outside of Jerusalem..

We are literally in the final hours of Jesus' earthly life.

All the years of obedience to the Father.

All the years of preaching and teaching the truth.

All the years of healing diseases, walking on the waters, and casting out demons are drawing to a close.

Jesus has poured his heart into ministry.

He has given his all in calling sinners to believe in Him.

He has done everything he can for the lost.

It is now time for Him to die for the sins of all who would believe in Him.

Yet, with that incredible burden staring Jesus in the face, our Lord is not thinking of himself, he is thinking of his disciples..

In fact, he is thinking of them so much that he proceeds to wash the dirt off their feet only hours before he will be drug through the dirt himself on the way to the cross.

This is selflessness of Christ.

His death is on the horizon, but the physical needs of his disciples are on his heart and mind.

Now, let's jump into this passage by identifying the overwhelming characteristic of Christ on display..

WE will call this..

I. Christ Loves (1)

Let us return to verse 1.

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 [a]to the end.

As we come to John 13, the setting has changed.

When we finished up John 12, Jesus was in the temple.

It was either Wednesday or Thursday morning.

However as chapter 13 opens, Jesus is now in what has become known as the Upper Room.

Here is picture of the supposed location of the Upper Room in modern Jerusalem.

It is impossible to know if this was the location spoken of in John 13-17 but this gives you a feel for the scene.

Now how did Jesus get here and more importantly, why is he here?

Well, the reason the disciples and Jesus have gathered into a room is to enjoy the Passover meal together..

The Jews call this Seder, and it simply the first meal to kick off a weeklong celebration of the Passover.

Now what is Passover?

Well, as the name implies, it is Jewish festival that commemorates God's grace and mercy in "passing over" their homes in Egypt as part of the final plague in 1445 BC.

To review for just a moment, Israel began as a small number of people who were descendants of Abraham.

When we get to the end of the book of Genesis, we are talking about a nation of only 75 people.

However as this group of people is forced to head south to Egypt, God blesses them and they begin to multiply rapidly.

They have so many children in the course of a few generations that the king of Egypt known as Pharaoh seeks to contain them before they overrun the Egyptians.

So he enslaves them in hopes of controlling their rapid growth, but the enslavement only multiplies the growth.

Eventually, God sends a leader named Moses who approaches Pharaoh and asks for Jewish freedom.

Pharaoh refuses to free Israel, so God begins to send a series of plagues on Egypt as judgment.

Though the plagues are devastating to the nation, Pharaoh refuses to budge.

So God brings the worst possible judgment on the nation.

He is going to kill all the firstborn child in the land of Egypt.

Since the Jews lived in the land, their firstborn would be also be in danger of this plague.

So God gave them specific instructions.

In order for the death angel to “pass over” their homes and spares their children, they had to slaughter their best lamb and smear his blood over their doors.

As the death angel came to homes with blood over their doors, he simply passed on the next house.

Once the plague hit and Israel was spared, God commanded them to remember his mercy by celebrating what the Jews called Passover each year.

It also known as the Festival of Unleavened Bread.

It is a week long event that always begins with the Passover meal.

As a Jewish man, Jesus would have never missed this meal since it was a requirement of the law.

Therefore, even with his death hours away, Jesus is keeping the law right up to the very end.

So that is why the disciples and Jesus are in this room.

In fact, it was commanded that the whole meal happen in the same place.

That may sound odd to us since we eat all of our meal in the same place, but the Jews would regularly eat an appetizer in one place, an entree in another house and then dessert in a third location...

However, the Passover meal could not travel, so Jesus and the disciples needed a place to eat the meal..

So how did they find this room?

Well, John doesn't give us the details, but we know from the other gospels that Jesus sent Peter and John out on Thursday afternoon to find a man carrying a pitcher of water..

They were to follow that man into a house and then inform the owner of the house that Jesus was going to eat the Passover in that guest room with his disciples.

In fact, let me just read this to you in Mark 14:12-16..

12 On the first day of Unleavened Bread, when [d]the Passover lamb was being sacrificed, His disciples *said to Him, “Where do You want us to go and prepare for You to eat the Passover?” 13 And He *sent two of His disciples and *said to them, “Go into the city, and a man will meet you carrying a pitcher of water; follow him; 14 and wherever he enters, say to the owner of the house, ‘The Teacher says, “Where is My guest room in which I may eat the Passover with My disciples?”’ 15 And he himself will show you a large upper room furnished and ready; prepare for us there.” 16 The disciples went out and came to the city, and found it just as He had told them; and they prepared the Passover.

Now that explains how and why Jesus got to this room.

But I hope it also helps us to see the connection between the Passover and the cross..

Just as the Jews were protected from death by a lamb's blood over their door, all who believe in Christ will be protected in death by his blood over their life.

Remember, the Passover wasn't possible with a dead lamb, and salvation isn't possible without a dead Lamb of God.

The Passover meal had been a foreshadowing of the cross to the Jews ever since Israel exited the land of Egypt in mid 1400 BC.

The smell of death always hung in the air in the time of the passover.

Jerusalem was even a city of blood at the time of Passover as upwards of 250,000 lambs were slaughtered in the temple...

So, the passover is central to this scene with the cross only hours away.

And Jesus knows all this..

Look back to verse 1..

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

Since the Passover meal couldn't be eaten until after sunset, we know that it was now late on Thursday evening..

Now, let me add something here that may answer some questions you have about the timing of these events, and it is this..

The Jews in Galilee slaughtered their lamb on Thursday afternoon and ate the Passover on Thursday evening, while the Jews of Judea in the south slaughtered their lamb on Friday afternoon and ate their Passover meal on Friday evening.

Since Jesus and all the disciples except Judas were from Galilee, a Thursday night Passover meal is expected and that is exactly what we see here.

This also allows Jesus to be executed on Friday afternoon while the Judean Jews are preparing for their Friday evening Passover by killing their lambs..

All of that points to the perfect timing of God to have His Son on the cross as the perfect Passover Lamb for all of Israel to see..

With all that background in our minds, let's get back to John 13...

So it is time for the Passover meal.

And Jesus knows the significance of what is happening and what is coming...

Yet with all that weight on his shoulders, he continues to show his love for the disciples..

Look at the end of verse 13..

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 [a]to the end.

This is truly amazing.

Even with the weight of sin bearing down on his life, Jesus is still concerned for those around him...

In this case, it is love for those who have followed Him..

They are “His own”.

You have to love that phrase.

If you are truly saved this morning, you belong to Christ.

You are the sheep of His flock.

You are loved by the Good Shepherd.

And Jesus is going to demonstrate his love for these disciples in tow incredible ways here.

He is first going to love them in a very practical way by washing their feet.

But he is also going to love them in a very spiritual way by giving them an example of how to show love to others..

I think everyone understands that love is seen as we serve others, but may we also remember that love is also seen in teaching others..

In fact, your Sunday School teachers study and teach to demonstrate their love for you.

They prepare and present, and that act of teaching you is evidence of their love for you.

They want you to grow in your faith.

They want you to know more of the Bible.

They don't get paid for their service.

They do it out a love for those around them in the church.

Yes, Jesus shows love in a towel and pan of water and clean feet, but he is also going to show love for his disciples by teaching them up to the very end of his life.

But this is what love does.

It puts the person last and other first.

You can't love with pride in your heart.

True love for others will put aside any pride because love can only be seen in humility.

The truth of this sense is that Jesus should be having his feet washed by the disciples.

In fact if anyone deserves to be served, it is Christ.

However, Christ didn't come to be served, he came to serve and John 13 is an incredible picture of this..

Now, let me also say this...

According to 1 Corinthians 13:5, true love does not take into account a wrong suffered...

In other words, we love even the unlovable.

And may I say that the disciples were not always the most lovable group of men.

They were hard hearted and hard headed at times.

They were slow to believe at times.

They were stubborn at times..

We even read of Peter's reluctance to have his feet washed by Jesus...

This is typical of this group of men..

But get this..

Luke tells us that just before Jesus washes their feet, the disciples are arguing among themselves who is the greatest among the 12...

And do you know why they were likely arguing about that?

Because of seating arrangements...

Clearly everyone wanted to sit beside Jesus..

So they all probably argued about who deserved to be there...

Now can you imagine Jesus in the midst of this dispute?

All that HE had taught them, and now they are acting like little kids at dinner time arguing over where someone sits...

But remember, true love is not dependent on the person receiving the love because love does not take into account any wrongs suffered..

Love is also patient and kind..

And we clearly see that in Christ here..

When we would be throwing in the air frustrated by such immaturity, Jesus lowers himself to the ground and serves those these same hard headed men by washing their feet..

This is love, and the reason for such an act of love is understood in light of what is coming.

Though the disciples have little understanding of how much their life is going to change in the next few days, Jesus does..

And here is what he knows..

If these men have any hope of taking the truth of Jesus to the world, they are going to need loads of love for one another and for the world..

Jesus could have taught them how to preach here.

Jesus could have taught them how to warn others here.

Jesus could have taught them a great way to do evangelism here..

But instead as He prepares to leave them behind, Jesus teaches them how to love..

And what a lesson it is..

Now, let's move from all this background to the nuts and bolts of what happened here..

We will simply call this..

II. Christ Serves (2-5)

Look back at verse 2..

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 all things into His hands, and that He had come forth from God and was going back to God, 4 *got up from supper, and *laid aside His garments; and taking a towel, He girded Himself. 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.

We won't get through these verses this morning, but let's introduce them..

And the first thing you notice is that Jesus gets up in the middle of supper to give this example of love..

The start of verse 2 lets us know that this took place “during supper.”

Now, the reason for this would be clear when you understand the culture of Jesus's day..

Two things...

#1 - Everyone walked and everyone wore sandals or nothing at all.

#2 - At Passover and most meals, people reclined at the table.

So dirty feet in your face was a great possibility at supper.

If that sounds gross, it is gross.

No most homes had a small basin of water at the entrance of the home for cleaning up.

However on this occasion, none of the disciples stepped up to be the one to wash the other's feet.

It may have been a result of all the talk about which of them was greatest..

As a result, no one wanted to admit that they were the last by taking the dirtiest job of all.

Now, this oversight would have become apparent as everyone laid down to take part in the Passover meal..

But no one got up, so Jesus got up from supper, grabbed a towel and got busy serving them.

This is nature of Christ.

He is a servant at heart.

Now that may not shock you as 21st century Christians raised in the Bible belt.

We know who Jesus is because we have been exposed to Scripture.

But let me assure that a God who serves his people is foreign to all the false gods of world history...

Though people have created all sorts of false idols and gods and false worship, one thing that they all share in common is the need of the worshipper to serve the god.

But Christ is different.

He doesn't sit in heaven asking people to jump higher to get to him.

Instead he comes to earth to live among the people and even serve the needs of the people He created.

This is the nature of Christ.

The one with perfect feet washing the imperfect feet of man..

There is none like Jesus.

Conclusion

Let me offer a couple thoughts for you to consider from John 13 this morning..

#1 - The love of Christ is difficult.

It is easy to say that we want to love others like Jesus, but when we really understand what that means it not as easy to do.

First, loving like Christ means being inconvenienced.

Jesus got up from supper to wash feet.

Some of us won't get up from supper to answer the phone.

But love overcomes our need for comfort and causes to seek the comfort of others.

Second, loving like Christ means submission to others.

As Jesus cleans dirty feet, he lowers himself under others.

But this is the nature of love.

Love causes us to think less of ourself.

Ever hug a kid?

The best way to do that is to bend your knees and lower yourself to them.

And if you have any age on you, that is not easy task.

But a hug on their level is love.

Look, Jesus is head and shoulders above anyone in the universe, but he went lower than anyone in the universe by grabbing a towel and washing feet.

However love isn't given in hopes of improving our status.

Love is given the when lower ourselves.

#2 - The nature of Christ is different.

I cannot stress this enough but the God of Christianity is so unique among the false gods of the world.

Name another religion where their god stoops down to the people in it.

I'll save you some time, -there is none.

Every other false religion of world history revolves around a man-invented deity that must be served by the people in it.

But the God of Christianity came to serve.

He healed people.

He taught people.

He fed people.

And ultimately, He gave his life as a ransom for many.

This week is the lead up to the cross, which we remember on Friday.

On Sunday, the tomb will be empty as we gather again to celebrate the resurrection.

But this week is a picture of service.

Our Lord giving his life to ransom the lives of those who believe in Him.

Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism all tell their followers to give their lives to get heaven.

Only Christianity declares that its God gave his life for its followers.

And that act of love and service is seen by our Lord
going to cross on Friday.

The one washing feet on Thursday night it the One who
will be hanging by his hands and feet on Friday
afternoon..

But this is the nature of our Savior.

He loves and serves even to the very end.

May we all follow his example.

Let us pray.