

Seeing Christ in Dirty Feet, part 2

(John 13:1-20)

(preached 4/21/19; Pine Grove BC Sun AM)

Introduction

In the mid 1800s, medicine and medical procedures were still very primitive.

Doctors did what they could to help people but they understood very little about the cause of sickness and disease..

Often times, people would go to a doctor to treat a small illness but then get much sicker after seeing the doctor.

To one doctor named Ignaz Semmelweis, there had to be an explanation.

So he began to study one hospital where a number of otherwise healthy mothers were coming to deliver their children but then getting sicker while they were there and often dying.

And what he discovered was this.

Women under the care of nurses and midwives often had children and then recovered fine, while women under the care of male doctors were getting sick.

Then it dawned on him.

The male doctors were much less likely to wash their hands as they travelled from patient to patient, while the ladies were much more sanitary.

As a result, he started encouraging the male doctors to wash their hands frequently and to keep their instruments in a chlorine solution to that would kill germs.

Interestingly the doctors reacted harshly to Semmelweis' suggestion.

They were offended by his accusation that they weren't washing their hands as frequently as the midwives of the hospital.

So they humiliated him and laughed at his silly theory.

In short time, Semmelweis was fired and when he tried to take his idea to other doctors and hospitals, they also laughed at his crazy idea.

Sadly at the age of 47, Semmelweis was involuntarily committed to a mental institution and got this..

He died 14 days later from an infection that was passed on to him by another patient.

Ultimately, history has proved the accuracy of Semmelweis' theory.

Now, hospitals and doctors are consistently disinfected.

Proper hand washing is taught in medical school and hand sanitizer hangs every 5 feet on hospital walls.

Sometimes, those who are humiliated end up winning in the end.

Today is an example of that.

Resurrection Sunday is vindication Sunday.

The One humiliated is now the One exalted.

The One who was scorned and rejected and ridiculed is now the One who is proved right.

Christ diagnosed our problem.

Sin is killing us.

Yet, that dismissed his theory.

Christ also offered a solution.

Repentance and faith in Him would wash away the sin.

Yet they rejected him.

And they sent Christ away from them in the worst way possible.

They sent him to his death on the cross.

Yet, he did not pass quietly in history.

He arose from that grave, which vindicated his message to the world.

And every Sunday, we gather to remember that resurrection.

In fact, this is why the church doesn't meet on Tuesday.

We meet in the same manner that the early church met.

WE meet on the the Lord's Day.

The Day of Resurrection.

So as we gather today on what the world calls Easter Sunday.

Nothing is really different in the minds and hearts of believers.

Jesus is just as alive today as He was last Sunday and as HE will be next Sunday.

The only difference is that the world takes a little more notice of Jesus today.

For us, it is business as usual in a sense.

We are always worshipping the resurrected Christ.

We are always calling sinners to repentance.

We are always affirming the truthfulness of the resurrection.

And we are always being overwhelmed by the glory of Christ.

For that reason, we are really aren't breaking stride this morning.

In fact, we are staying on task in John's gospel as we come to know and love our Savior more by what God inspired John to write about the life and ministry of Christ.

In fact, we handle every word that John wrote with care.

We handle every verse, every chapter with care because each word of God draws us to closer to Him and brings our lives one step closer to Christlikeness.

So if you will take your Bible and let's return to John 13, which describes what is commonly known as Jesus Washing the Disciples Feet.

In this incredible text, the resurrection of Christ is exalted by the humiliation of Christ that came first.

In fact, the humiliation of washing feet will be nothing to the humiliation that comes to Christ in the next 24 hours.

As Jesus sits down to a bowl of water to clean the disciples feet, he is hours away from his own death.

He is hours away from a dirty body covered in blood.

Hours away from crowns of thorns.

Hours away from spit and whips and cuts and bruises and ultimately a shameful cross.

What we see here in Jesus going low to serve his disciples is nothing compared to how low he went to save your soul.

So, let's continue in this humiliation of washing feet, and let us grow in our love of the One who paid for our sins in full.

Now last week, we read the entire passage, so I won't do that this week, but let's remember the setting.

It is Thursday evening in a banquet room about a residence in Jerusalem.

Jesus and his 12 disciples have gathered there to celebrate the Passover, which commemorated God's sparing of Israel in Egypt as the death angel passed over Jewish homes in the final plague on the Egyptians.

The sparing came as the Jews slaughtered the best lamb and smeared the blood over their doors..

And God has commanded a remembrance of that event every year in Israel.

So Jesus is sitting down for the Passover which kicked off this week long celebration..

As they enter this banquet room, no one offers to clean the feet of the others.

Most likely, that oversight is a result of the conversation that they were having about which one of the 12 was the greatest..

Since washing feet would be an admission of servitude, no one is likely to be the first to wash the other's feet.

So as supper begins, Jesus gets up and prepares to do this task for them.

Again, this is a preview of the humiliation that is coming to Him, but it also an opportunity to teach these disciples a very important lesson before Jesus dies.

Last week, we saw that this scene was an act of love..

Look at 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.

If the disciples are going to be tasked with taking the gospel to the world, they will have to be men filled with love for others.

Jesus knows they love him, but their love for others is lacking.

In fact, arguing about their greatness is a sign of how much they need to grow in their love of others.

If you can't love those closest to you, who can you love?

So Jesus is offering an example of great love for others.

And we also looked at verses 2-5, which simply describe the act of washing feet..

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.

So Christ loves and Christ shows that love by serving others in a practical way..

This leads us to point #3..

III. Christ Cleans (6-11)

Let's read verses 6-11..

*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."*

As Jesus does a literal act of love, he also teaches a spiritual truth.

And teaches it to Peter, who is one of our favorites simply because he is as hard headed as we are..

You can picture the scene.

Jesus has washed other disciples feet, but he gets to Peter and look, there is always one in every crowd who has to be contrary..

And this time it is Peter.

No, Jesus. You ain't washing my feet.

Though we may try to shine a good light on Peter and say this was true humility.

I tend to think that this is an attempt at spiritual pride.

Peter, wanting the others to think that he was super spiritual, tells Jesus that he isn't worthy of a foot washing..

Jesus answers gently and kindly and simply tells Peter that he doesn't understand what Jesus is doing.

The point being..

“Peter, you aren't that smart and you aren't that spiritual. Just let me do this and you will understand later.”

In other words, Peter this is nothing compared to the humiliation that is about to come to me.

Once you see my humiliation tomorrow, you will understand that I came into the world the first time to serve humanity.

Now, if Jesus corrects you one time, just be quiet and take his word for it.

Not Peter.

Verse 8...

8 Peter *said to Him, “Never shall You wash my feet!”

In other words, “Despite what you say, I understand now. I am the most spiritual of this bunch of goofballs. You are not washing my feet. I am the most humble of all.”

This is actually the worst kind of arrogance attempting to hide behind humility..

You know people like this who try to appear super spiritual in order to impress others..

They claim great humility while demonstrating great spiritual pride.

Yet, Jesus has had enough of the pride.

In verse 8, he moves from the literal act of cleaning verse to the spiritual act of forgiving sin.

Jesus answered him, “If I do not wash you, you have no part with Me.”

Peter may have been trying to appear super spiritual, but the reality is this...-

Jesus is going to clean his feet and if Peter won't accept Christ's humbling himself to clean his feet, he will never accept Christ's humiliation on the cross to forgive his sin.

Now to be clear Peter is already saved.

In fact, Jesus is going to tell him that in just a moment.

But even the saved need to realize that our forgiveness has been provided by the humiliation of our Savior.

Jesus is God.

No one deserves to have their feet washed by Him much less have their sins forgiven through Him.

But the reality is that all believers will be raised to heaven because Christ went low on the cross..

In fact, Peter had to understand that because Peter was going to take that message to the world..

And Jesus is pressing that into his heart on the final night of his life..

To his credit, Peter seems to get it.

Verse 9..

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.”

One of the top causes of accidents on roads is over correction.

People drift off the road and then in an attempt to correct, they jerk the wheel and the car goes to other side of the road which is equally dangerous.

In an attempt to correct his false humility, Peter now asks Jesus to get his entire body if being washed by Jesus signifies having his sins forgiven.

Yet, that is not the point.

Jesus isn't washing sin off Peter's feet, he is simply washing away literal dirt.

In fact, Jesus tells him in the middle of verse 10..

Peter you are clean which means Peter you are saved.

I am not washing sin off your feet.

I am simply serving your immediate need here of removing dirt.

And the example is clear.

If you bathed this morning, you don't need a bath to eat supper.

You just need clean feet.

In the same way, if you are saved, you don't need to get saved over and over.

You are fully forgiven.

You simply need to keep the sin washed out of your life by repenting and confessing it to the Lord daily.

Again, an important lesson for Peter the preacher.

The gospel that he will take to the world is not get saved today and get saved tomorrow and get saved the next..

We don't baptize you today and next Sunday and the following Sunday.

The true gospel proclaims the once for all forgiveness of sin through repentance and faith in Christ.

You don't need to wash away sins every day by going to a priest and confessing.

You don't need to wash away sins every day by getting baptized over and over.

The true gospel is put your faith in Christ alone, and he will forgive every sin.

Past, present, and future. Gone forever. Completely washed away in you life once-for-all.

This is the great doctrine of justification.

God declares the sinner righteous by faith alone in Christ alone.

And when a person truly put his faith in Christ, he is forgiven and set free and headed to heaven.

In terms of what Jesus is saying here, one bath in the blood of Christ is enough to clean the sinner forever.

The picture of washing feet his simply a picture of sanctification.

We simply identify sin after salvation, repent of it and keep our feet clean by confessing it to the Lord.

None of that improves our initial bath.

WE are clean. We don't need to bathe again.

We simply fight against sin to show our love for Christ.

Peter needs to know that incredible truth.

He is not preaching a gospel of salvation by good works.

He is not going to tell the nations that they must be saved over and over and over every week.

He is not going to tell the nations that they need a priest or a confession booth or a pool big enough to baptize the church every week.

Instead, he is going to preach the full forgiveness of sin through repentance and faith in Christ alone once for all.

He is going to tell the nation that they are made right by the finished work of Christ on the cross.

And I am sure that this picture of Jesus washing his feet and this conversation with Jesus was part of so many sermons he preached.

The application for Peter and for all who believe the gospel is that we tell the world that Jesus cleans away our sin once-for-all through his once-for-all death on the cross..

This is the truth.

This is the gospel, and Peter learned it while Jesus sat at his feet.

Before we leave this section also note the end of verse 10 and verse 11..

Judas is among the disciples having their feet cleaned by Jesus..

Sadly, Jesus washed the dirt on his feet, but never washed away the sin in his life..

More on that in just a moment..

Let's now go to verses 12-17..

We will call this..

IV. Christ Teaches (12-17)

Verse 12..

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.

As Peter personally learns some foundational truths of the gospel from, the entire group of disciples is also going to benefit from this scene..

Though we think about Peter’s future, all of these men are going to be the foundation of the church.

They are all going to take part in establishing the great institution that the world has ever seen..

And that institution is the Lord’s church.

While the true gospel is the church’s greatest possession, it is also important to note the messengers of that gospel.

This ragtag group of disciples are going to be the charter members of the church.

So in verses 12-17, Jesus teaches the most important characteristic of those who are going to lead the church, and that is humility and love for others..

You see, these men were nobodies in their culture.

Fishermen and tax collectors were not be high on anyone's social list, but these men were now going to the CEOs of the church.

And power and authority always tempts people to pride.

Look at churches today.

When leaders make much of themselves, Christ is always made less of.

I look around at false religion today.

Men in robes and fancy hats and all sorts of religious looking clothing..

All designed to make the leader look spiritual..

This is the outcome of pride.

The Pharisees loved the best seats in the synagogue.

The fancy robes.

The attention of men.

Nothing has changed even in the church.

Some men love the power of the pulpit.

They love the authority they have over the flock.

Yet, Jesus is painting a picture of church leadership here to these men who will found the church.

And the picture of church leadership is one of meeting the needs of those under your authority.

Jesus is their Master, but he waved their feet.

This is the example of how to lead.

Christian leadership is not found in a ladder but in a stool.

Proper Christian leadership is servant leadership.

It is not top down leadership.

It is leading by serving.

As Jesus washed the feet of those who will be the CEOs of the church, he shaped their heart for ministry..

They were given the greatest example of how to lead others.

And every church leader and even every Christian who serves others is always blessed by the Lord.

Christ loves.

Christ serves.

Christ teaches...

And finally..

V. Christ Separates (18-20)

Verse 18..

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.”

Though we will get deeper into this truth next week, not every man in that room was fully clean.

As I said before, Judas had clean feet but a dirty heart.

Now the astounding reality of this scene is that Jesus cleaned the feet of one who wasn't his own.

Jesus stooped before Judas and serves his physical need while knowing his spiritual corruption.

Yet the reality of verse 20 is that Christ is the great divide in human history.

Judas is going to show his true colors.

He is going to demonstrate the fact that someone can be close to Jesus but on the wrong side of Him.

In this room, Judas has his feet cleaned by Jesus.

Judas eats with Jesus.

Judas speaks with Jesus.

Judas fellowships with Jesus.

But proximity to Jesus is no guarantee of right relationship to Jesus.

As we see in verse 2, Judas in the room with Christ but the devil is in his heart.

And though were are almost 2000 years past the scene in this room, nothing has changed.

There are church today filled with people on Easter..

Their ears are being filled with the glory of Christ but their heart is filled with evil.

Do not let that be you this morning...

Salvation is not horse shoes and hand grenades.

Close doesn't count.

An almost gospel is no gospel at all.

Being close to Christ is not good enough.

You need to be in Christ.

And you can only be in Christ by turning from your sin and putting all your trust in Him alone.

There's no points won today by being in church on Easter.

There's no points for your new clothes.

There's no points for bringing a Bible.

The only point that counts is your faith alone in Christ alone.

Conclusion

Today is the day of the empty tomb, and we celebrate that with all our heart.

But today is also the day of the empty water bowl.

Christ, the One facing death, found a bowl and washed the feet of the men around him..

He not only washed their feet, he ministered to their hearts, teaching them the gospel and how to love and serve others.

The church are the people of the empty tomb but we are the people of the empty wash basin.

We affirm the life, the death, the resurrection but we also the affirm the humiliation of Christ.

And as he took the final moments of his life to prepare the disciples for gospel ministry, we are not holding the gospel that they passed on to us.

May we serve the world.

That doesn't mean washing feet necessarily but it does mean telling the world the only way to have their hearts fully washed by Christ..

My prayer and me this Resurrection Sunday is that you know the Christ of the empty tomb.

He is still alive, and He is still serving and saving the lost.

Come to Him in repentance and faith so that your tomb will also be empty one day.

Let us pray.