

The Last Supper

by Gayle Erwin

Jesus' timing and identity are crucial for his mission, and his actions at the Last Supper show his humility and willingness to serve others.

Duration: 55:45

Scripture: Matthew 14:29-30, Matthew 16:23, Matthew 20:20-21, John 1:14, John 13:3, John 13:14-15, John 13:17

Topics: "Last Supper"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher sets the stage by explaining the significance of the first three verses of John 13. He highlights Jesus' knowledge that the Father had given Him all power, emphasizing the incredible authority Jesus possessed. The preacher then transitions to discussing the nature of Jesus and the profound passage in John 13. He explains that this event takes place during the Feast of the Passover, a time of excitement and crowds. Jesus, with a keen sense of timing, knew that His hour had come to depart from this world and go to the Father.

Transcript

We continue tonight in this series on the nature of Jesus. We've looked at the 14 points that I think make up his basic nature. Tonight I want us to look at one of the most incredible passages in scripture that seem to condense what he is and at the same time who we are.

Go with me to John chapter 13. This passage begins this way. Now before the Feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that his hour had come, that he should depart from this world to the Father, let me stop there and say, this was Passover time.

Now it tells me that it was an exciting time. There were crowds in town, electricity was in the air, it was the peak season you might say. And now it lets us know that Jesus knew that his time had come, his hour had come for him to leave this world and go to the Father.

Jesus had a great sense of timing. Timing really is important. You can do the right thing at the wrong time and it becomes the wrong thing.

My wife's birthday is in December. If I were to get her a birthday card today and give it to her, she'd probably burst into tears and say, you forgot what my birthday was. Depending of course on the value of the gift that accompanied it.

You've probably heard someone try to tell a joke that didn't understand timing. Tell you the punchline first and they reconstruct it and you end up laughing at them rather than with them. Well that's, you don't answer the phone before it rings because of good timing.

I don't know if you thought about that. And the Bible tells us in different places that Jesus did or did not do certain things because he knew his time had or had not come. Now he knows the time has come for him to leave the world and go back to the Father.

Now having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end or he showed them just how much he loved them or the full extent of his love or what great amount of his love there was. I want to write this up here because this is a significant statement. Let's say the full extent of his love.

When I hear that, when I read that, I'm expecting some incredible expression of his love. We're talking about the love of God. This isn't just saying he now sung them a love song or said a nice thing or two to them.

But he loved them to the end. He showed them just how much he loved them. This is an awesome statement.

Then it says, supper being ended. I rather like the fact that the Bible is filled with food moments. Most of this gospel is written around a table.

You understand that, don't you? Supper being ended, the devil having already put it into the heart of Judas's chariot, Simon's son to betray him. Now we have a villain in this story. Now you know when you're reading a story, the first paragraphs or pages will tend to set the stage for you so you will have the information you need in order to understand the story.

The first three verses of this chapter set the stage for this awesome event so we will understand what's going on. Now we know we have a villain. Jesus, verse 3, knowing that the father had given all things into his hands or knowing that the father had given him all power.

Incredible. Knowing that he had all power. I want to write all power up here because once again we have a significant statement.

When I hear or read this, I'm expecting some incredible show. Why would it tell us that the father had given all things unto his hand? Why would it tell us that he had all power unless some great show of power is about to occur? And that he had come from God and was going to God or was returning to God. In other words, Jesus knew who he was.

He knew where he had come from and he knew where he was going. He knew who he was. Now that's an interesting statement.

Why does it open this way in these passages unless something is going to happen that you need to know this for? Let's talk about this for a second. He knew who he was. When you know who you are, you never have to prove anything and you can never lose face.

You've heard of the Don Juan, the Romeo, the Casanova type who has this long string of conquered women and the world looks on and says, what a man. The fact is he's not sure he's a man and he has to keep proving it to himself. See, that's the very nature of that syndrome, but when you know who you are,

you never have to prove anything and you can never lose face.

For instance, if you're beautiful and you know it and someone comes up and says, you're ugly, you don't go away thinking, well, I thought I was beautiful, but I just found out I was ugly. No, you feel sorry for them that they're blind. Or if you're intelligent and you know it and someone comes up and says, you're dumb, you don't go away thinking, well, I thought I was intelligent, but I just found out I was dumb.

No, you're sorry that they have no more discernment than that. So if you know who you are, you never have to prove anything and you can never lose face. Ah, the problem though, how do we know who we are? It isn't easy.

In fact, fellas, if you'll forgive me, I'm going to share a trade secret with the ladies here tonight. I don't think you ladies know just how difficult it is in this day and age for us men to grow up really knowing what it means to be a man. Everything works against us.

You've seen a certain cigarette advertisement out there, haven't you, with a man on it. Have you noticed that it isn't me? They didn't even ask me. I guess they were looking for someone a bit more masculine.

I'm sure there'll be some football coaches in heaven, two or three maybe, but every football coach I had tried to make me feel that if I hadn't killed somebody or wanted to real bad, I probably wasn't a man. It works against us. When I was a kid, on the back of every comic book was an ad.

The first panel showed this chap. We'll call him Skinny Runt. He had a beautiful girlfriend.

We'll call her Sweet Thing. I don't know how he got her, but they're at the beach. And along comes the third character, Bully, kicks sand in their face.

Sweet Thing says to Skinny Runt, are you going to let him do that? Which means, why don't you and him fight? The last panel shows Sweet Thing going off with Bully and Skinny Runt standing alone and lonely. And then it asks you the question, do you want to be a 98-pound weakling? Now, I was too naive to realize that the average weight of the kids reading the thing was 98 pounds. But at the bottom of the page was the picture of perfect manhood, Charles Atlas.

And I, with thousands of others, sent off my 298 in hopes that I too could be a real man. When I finished the course, I wanted to write him another letter. So I finished the course, now send me the muscles.

Everything works against us. In fact, when I got married, I had just a little trouble helping my wife in the kitchen, because that's woman's work, you know. She insisted on putting an apron on me.

You see, that's what made it worse. I knew the doorbell would ring and I'd forget to take it off. But the real test would come when we would be out shopping.

Both of our arms are full, but I'm stronger. She says, honey, would you carry my purse? So I'd carry it way out like that so people wouldn't think that I knew what to do with it. And I was afraid they'd say, well, it's not your color anyway.

It's not easy. But I've come to grips with that. I know what it means to be a man, to be a man of God.

I can buy my own purse now if I want to. Well, how did Jesus know who he was? How did he know? Did he run a poll? I'm trying to figure out who I am. I have several options here, you know, undecided.

Okay, well, I'm trying to figure out who. No, no, no, no. He had heard his father say, this is my beloved son in whom I am well pleased.

Hear ye him. Folks, the Lord has told you who you are. Please hear it.

Find out what he says about you here in his word, and then you know who you are. Jesus knew who he was. Consequently, he didn't have to prove anything.

Often when individuals would say things to him that I would have responded to with genuine appreciation, such as when Nicodemus says, we know you're a man come from God, I would have said, yes, thank you. What else have you noticed about me? Jesus already knew that. He didn't need anyone to tell him.

He knew who he was. So he didn't have to prove anything, and he could not lose faith. And he had all power.

Oh, what would you do if you had all power? We dream of it, don't we? In fact, power is what makes the world go around, isn't it? Power is the subject of the world out there. Power is what fuels the money area. Power is what fuels politics.

Who will be in power? We do dream of it. But have you ever heard the statement, power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely? It's true. It's true.

I know. You give me just a little bit of power, and I'm gone. For instance, I fly an awful lot.

And in all my years and hundreds of thousands of miles of flying, I have never, ever purchased a first-class plane ticket. I discovered my part of the plane gets there about not the same time. But I have flown first class.

You see, when you fly as much as I do, they'll often upgrade you out of sheer pity for how often you have to fly. But the thing is, when I get a regular old coach tourist ticket, it goes in a gray jacket, see? So I put the boarding pass and then put it back in my case. But if I get a first-class upgrade, it goes in a red ticket jacket.

I put it up here in my shirt pocket. I just walk around and let everyone know, see who's going in this plane first, see? First class, see? And after just a few minutes of that, the Lord speaks to my heart and says, well, how about that, Erwin, you didn't even buy it, and already you're corrupt. Oh, yeah, that's right.

It corrupts us, but we still dream of it. Oh, we do. In fact, if you will forgive me, fellas, I'm going to reveal one more trade secret.

I don't know if you ladies know, but in the heart of every man here, there's a Superman. It's there, I know, I know. How often in my dreams, it's the world championship football game, and we're behind by five points, and it's the last play of the game, and I say to the quarterback, throw it to me.

And with blinding speed, I outrun the defenders, and in the corner of the end zone, with a mighty leap in one hand, I catch the ball and come down in bounds, and we've won the world championship, and the crowd goes wild, surges onto the field, picks me up, puts me on their shoulder, and carries me off, and I humbly let them do it. Or how many times in my flights of fancy, we're somewhere over the ocean in a crowded 747, the stewardess comes screaming down the aisle, the pilot's dead, the pilot's dead, what are we going to do? I'll see what I can do, ma'am. So I make my way to the cockpit, and with incredible skill,

learn how to fly that thing.

And when we've landed safely, the TV cameras are all there, the president's on the phone thanking me, and I tell him, I only did what anyone would do under the circumstances, sir. Folks, we dream of it, it's there, and yet it corrupts. Now here is Jesus, think of it, with all the power of the universe coursing through his veins, folks, this incredible power that flung billions of galaxies out in space, man, this power that created this earth, with all of this power coursing through his veins, in danger of absolute corruption, he throws off his outer clothes and goes over to those turkeys who've been arguing about who is the greatest in the kingdom.

But before I deal with that, before I deal with that, I need to draw you a picture. You all have seen, you probably have your own personal copy in some form at your house of a world-famous painting by Leonardo da Vinci called The Last Supper, right? Beautiful art, beautiful art, terrible theology. It's not the way it looked.

So if you'll permit me, I'm going to correct Leonardo tonight, and prove to you that I'm not an artist, okay? If you were to look at that table from the top, it would look something like this, sort of a squared-off open horseshoe shape, like so, known as a Roman triclinium. That was the more common table in that particular day, and especially the table of finer homes, which this was. Now it was a low table.

They did not sit at tables as we sit at tables today. They reclined at tables. They would recline on their left elbows, like so, and eat with their right hands.

And if you're ever in a country that eats with their hands, let me remind you to eat with your right hand. It's the custom in most of those countries where that occurs. They would eat with their right hand.

They would recline on pads or pillows or low couches and eat in that particular way. So this was a low table that they reclined at. Leonardo shows them standing or sitting.

That's inaccurate. This was the foot of the table, and this was the head of the table, and people would seat themselves at this table or recline at it according to their rank, with the less important down here and the more important up here. Jesus said, by the way, which seat should you take at a banquet? The lowest one, right? That way if the host comes in and sees you and says, friend, what are you doing there? Well, you can get up and say, well, where do you want me to sit? Yeah.

But if you take the highest seat and the host comes in and says, friend, what are you doing there? Well, you'll be embarrassed, and you'll get up and have to move down. Now, we know certain things about this table. We know, for instance, that a person of first rank would recline there.

The host would recline here in the second position at the important side. The guest of honor would recline in that third position if there was only one guest of honor, and then they would recline around this table until you come to the person of lowest rank. From the clues given us in the scripture, I want to place four people at this table, and in so doing, lights will come on in your mind.

We know, of course, that Jesus would have served as the host, so let's put him right here, which is, of course, a little different from where Leonardo da Vinci places him. We also know who this person of first rank was because he tells us. It's difficult to be number one without letting somebody know, and so this chap tells us.

He tells us that he was the disciple whom Jesus loved, who leaned against his breast. Now, when I first read that, I thought, what kind of fellows were these, anyway? But he's just telling you where he sat, see, because most questions and comments would be funneled through him, and in order to speak to Jesus, he had to lean back against his chest, see? It's as simple as that, so we know that this is John. We also know who the guest of honor is because of a certain custom and belief that Jewish people had then.

They believed that to eat with someone was literally to become part of him. Now, this has certain implications for us as far as communion is concerned, see? This is why Paul lets us know in 1 Corinthians chapter 10 that we are members of one another because we're partakers of the same loaf, you see, so it was a very powerful concept, but this was also why they got very upset at Jesus because he ate with sinners, and this is also one reason why the Judaizers were so upset, the early legalists in the church who, when they spied out the liberty of the new converts, they finally end up saying, okay, okay, let the Gentiles get saved, but don't eat with them. So, you see, eating with someone was really an awesome honor.

You felt that you were part of that person. They had another belief, and that was that the highest of these honors would be to actually dip in the same bowl with someone else, which is what the host and the guest of honor would do, and the host would begin the banquet by taking a bit of bread, dipping it into the sop, they called it. Now, I know that doesn't sound appetizing, but probably hot dog wouldn't sound appetizing to them either.

They would dip it into the sop and reach across his shoulder, place the bread in the mouth of the guest of honor, and that would officially begin the banquet. Now we know who this man is, don't we? Who dipped with Jesus, who got the first bite? Judas. Now, we know who these other men were, but we don't know where they sat until we get down to this person of lowest rank.

You see, at one point Jesus said, one of you will betray me. They all said, is it I, is it I, is it I, is it I? This man signaled across the table to John and said, ask him who it is. Peter, what's he doing here? He's probably wondering himself.

He's probably thinking, this is no place for a pope, you know that, guys. Well, what are they doing seated this way? It actually is a significant question, and I want us to deal with it. I have three theories as to why they were seated this way.

The first one is one that I do not believe is true, and that is that Jesus seated them this way. He could have. He could have.

He could have said, John, come here. I still love you. Judas, I'm going to give you another chance.

Peter, I want you over there where I can see you, boy. He could have, but the reason I don't believe he did is because now I understand why the apostles constantly argued. Every time they sat down to eat, the question would come up, who said where? If Jesus had seated them, there would have been no question.

They would have said, look, he put me here, so leave me alone. But they constantly argued over who was the greatest. Now I can understand why, because every day, who sits where, would come up.

Do you remember from your early days, or maybe the children in your household, hearing these words? You sat by the window last time. You always rush out here first, just so you can get the best seat. Well, it's my turn.

Folks, that is an apostolic argument. So the fact that they argued says to me Jesus didn't seat them. He didn't care where they sat.

So that brings up my second theory, that this is the result of their argument. Personally, I think Peter started it and lost it. I can hear him arguing for himself.

Wait a minute, you guys, who was with him on the Mount of Transfiguration? And the other fellow said, yeah, and who got it all wrong, wanted to build three tabernacles? That's right, I forgot about that. Well, wait a minute, who had the great revelation that he was the Messiah? They said, yeah, and to whom did he have to say, get behind me, Satan, right after that? Yeah, that's right, I forgot. Well, who walked on water? Yeah, and who sank? That's right, I forgot about that.

So here he is. But that brings up an interesting question. This man Judas, what is he doing seated up here? Now folks, we have Judas all wrong.

We do. When I say the word Judas, what pops into your mind? Do you see as I do this beady-eyed, shifty, obvious criminal type with his left hand tightly clutching the money bags and his other hand going for your purse? That's what you see. But have you ever chosen a treasurer for anything, an organization or whatever? Who did you look for as a treasurer? Did you look for a beady-eyed, shifty, obvious criminal type with his left hand tightly clutching the money bags and his other hand going for your purse? Of course not.

You looked for the most honest, upright, dependable person you could find. That is Judas. That's Judas.

I believe he was one of the top guys. Well, then why wasn't he with Jesus at the great events? Oh, I think he would have been. I think everyone knew he would have been.

But he was the one man Jesus could trust to take care of the business. So he was probably more advanced than the others, they thought. In fact, this very night, all of the things Jesus did to point out who he was, these other chaps that we call apostles, who I think were fairly slow, didn't have a clue.

Do you realize that? When Jesus did everything but name Judas, and then said, go do what you must do, and Judas gets up to leave to betray him, the rest of the fellas thought that he either went out to get more food for the banquet or to give money to the poor. He had everybody fooled but Jesus. But my real theory is this with one slight adjustment.

You see, in the course of this evening, these guys once again argued over who was the greatest. I can't believe it. They had been with Jesus for three years.

How long does it take? But once again, they argued over who was the greatest. And Jesus, oh, such patience. I am amazed.

I would have fired them. But with great patience, typical of Jesus, he says, now fellas, fellas, fellas, wait a minute, wait a minute. Remember? He that is greatest must be servant of all.

Remember guys? He that is greatest must be humble. Remember? He that is greatest must be least and last. Remember? And I think Peter went, oh yeah, that's right.

Well, I'll sit over here. We all know why, don't we? So here he is. But when you don't know who you are, you're going to do everything you can to prove that you don't belong there.

I know. I watch this man. I know him very well.

I'll show you what I mean. A couple of stories. When I was in high school, I had a teacher who was an awesome teacher, best teacher I've ever had, and I've already told you about him.

He did one thing that I did not like. Every six weeks when he would issue new grades, he would seat us according to our grade. I know.

Top grade, right front, in descending order, all the way back to idiot's row. One time, one time, I did it. I made it.

Top grade. Oh, I'll never forget that day. He seated me there and I waited patiently while he seated the lesser ones.

And when he had finished and turned to come back to the front of the class to continue his lecture, the door opened and in walked a transfer student. A girl from another city had moved there. He looked at her and he says, oh my, this class moves like lightning.

You're going to have to sit right up front where you can see everything. Gail? Yes, sir? I got up and went to the only available seat. Idiot's row.

It would have been OK, except that everyone who came in that classroom knew how he seated people. So they would look around and see me back there and they go, too bad, Gail, too bad. So I did everything I could to prove that I didn't belong there.

Every question he asked, me, me, me, let me answer, me, me, me. I was obnoxious. I'll tell you another story.

This one's true. I almost wish it happened to me. It was so good.

It happened at a Christian college. I'll not tell you where. But the president of the student body at this particular college, this particular year, could only be described as Mr. Clean.

He was one of those sorts that you thought he never even imagined sent. Well, as things would happen, the roommate they assigned to him in the dormitory this semester could only be described as Mr. Dirty. He was the one man, if anybody bothered to pray, it was for that man's salvation.

Well, they had a real move of God on campus that semester. And Mr. Dirty had his encounter with God. Ah, the place was ecstatic.

Well, one of the customs of that campus when such a move of God would occur is on Friday night they would have a giant bonfire to celebrate it, where the students could come and gather around and worship the Lord and perhaps write their sins on a piece of paper, crumple it up and throw it into the fire as an act of repentance and symbol of forgiveness. Or if there was something that you felt had separated you from God, you could throw it in the fire. Mr. Dirty had something he wanted to throw away.

He had a rather extensive collection of pornography, and he didn't want it anymore. He wanted to throw it away. One small problem.

Mr. Dirty had a job on Friday night and could not be there personally to throw it away. So he asked his roommate, Mr. Clean, if he would throw it away for him. The tension is already building, isn't it? Can you see this scene? A thousand students gathered around this great fire.

The spiritual temperature was as hot as the fire. And here comes the president of the student body, walking toward that circle with his arms full of the smut. As he reaches the outer edge, the other students look and go, Oh, I didn't know.

And the buzz begins around the circle. The sweat begins to roll from his forehead. He makes his way through, and the other students all go, Oh, I didn't know.

And the buzz continues around the circle. By the time he gets to the fire, sweat is pouring from his face, and everyone knows. And every eye is on him.

And he looks around, and he throws one in the fire, and everyone else, And he says, It's not mine. It's not mine. And he throws another one.

It's not mine. It's not mine. Would you say he was uncomfortable? You know, Jesus hung on the cross with every ounce of my sin and crud hanging on him, and yours, and never once did he say, It's not mine.

Awesome. Well, here they are. But they're uncomfortable.

You see, any time you are gathered and you are comparing yourself with anyone else, there will be tension at the table. I know how I would feel if I were this person right here. I know how I'd feel about that man ahead of me.

I'd say, Huh, he has no business being there. Anything he can do, I can do better. In fact, I know things about him.

If I ever tell the boss, he won't be seated there. And I know how I would feel about this person right behind me, too. You've got to watch him.

He's ambitious. All he wants is my position. Well, I wish I could buy him for what he's worth and sell him for what he thinks he's worth.

Tension at the table. Any time you say, Well, what's in this for me? Tension at the table. Nobody seems to pay attention.

Tension at the table. How can they let him do it? Tension at the table. There's tension at this table.

Now, I need to tell you one more thing before we finish this. Every age, every generation has a series of events to which we don't give names to them. Sociologists do that.

They call them greeting rituals. For instance, if I were to knock on Romaine's door today, he wouldn't think, Oh, knock on the door. What are the greeting rituals? You just know them, see.

He would come and say, Gail, good to see you. And he'd shake my hand and hug my neck. He'd say, Come in.

Let me take your coat. Have a seat. Let me get you a cup of coffee or some other godly drink.

And that's known as greeting rituals. But if this were 2,000 years ago, it would be different. I wouldn't knock.

I'd... He'd come to the door, Gail, good to see you. He'd kiss me on both cheeks. And if I were especially welcomed, he would seat me and he would anoint my head with oil.

Now, we don't understand that today because that's not part of our greeting rituals. I often will pray for the sick. And also often I will anoint them, as the Bible indicates to do.

But you know how we do it today. We have this little vial, you know. Gotcha.

And that's okay. That's anointing, but that's really not the way they would do it back then. They would take this bottle of oil and pour it on your head and slick it down.

Yuck. But this was before the days of shampoos and hairdryers and that was a very soothing, cleansing, honoring thing to do. And when I understand that, now I can see why in Psalm 23, David gets so excited.

He says, you prepare a banquet for me right in the presence of my enemies. You anoint my head with oil. My cup runneth over.

He was excited. There's another advantage, too. You see, if I were to leave his house today, especially welcomed, nobody would know.

But back then, everyone would know. They'd say, somebody loves that dude. Look at that greasy head.

But there's one other thing that he would do that is likewise not part of our modern understanding, not part of our greeting rituals. He would wash my feet. Now, everyone wore sandals.

The roads were but dust. It didn't take long before it was uncomfortable and a host would see that your feet were washed because that's what hospitality is. It's the art of making people comfortable.

One small catch. That was the lowest job in the house. Now, if a man owned any slaves, it would be the lowest-ranked slave who would wash feet.

If he didn't, if he was too poor to have any slaves, then the host would wash feet himself. But it would be a public admission of his lowest state. One other little thought that adds tension to this story.

In that day, they believed that the dirtiest part of the body was the bottom of the feet. So here they are. There is more tension here than we realize because no one's feet had been washed.

I know what they're thinking. John is thinking, Why doesn't Peter wash feet? Peter's thinking, I'm not washing feet. If I wash feet, they'll think I belong here.

I think these men up here were probably saying, Why doesn't somebody do something? I hate it as a pastor when someone comes to me and says, Pastor, why doesn't the church do such and such? I say, Well, who do you think the church is? They'll probably answer, Well, we hired you, didn't we? If I had been Jesus, I know what I would have done. I would have held up one foot and said, Okay, fellas, you see anything that hadn't been done? It's worth 50 points right now. But that is not what happened, is it? Instead, with all the power of the universe coursing through his veins, think of it, folks, this incredible power that threw billions of galaxies out in space, man, this power that created this earth with all of this

power coursing through his veins, he gets up from that table, throws off his outer clothes, and goes over to these guys who have been arguing about who is the greatest Jesus.

Now, if I were Jesus, the next words would be, And he straightened them out. I'm an old farm boy, and we had a saying on the farm that covered this. We would have said, And he cleaned their plows.

He did, he did. But that's not what happened, is it? It says, And he began to wash their feet. Oh, so that's what you do when you want to show someone how much you love them.

Precisely. So that's what you do when you have all power and you want to use it in a way that doesn't corrupt you and damage others. Precisely.

So that's what you do when you know who you are. Exactly. Now we know why he said these things.

Now, I do need to tell you that I don't believe that Jesus was here instituting a new liturgy. If you believe in foot washing, don't stop it for what I'm going to say. I think a foot washing service really can be a very powerful thing, and I've been in some that were awesome.

But I've also discovered that if you're going to have one, you don't dare announce it ahead of time. Because most of the people won't come, and the ones who do come with the cleanest feet they've had in centuries. New socks, powdered, you know.

So we can go through ritual foot washing. I don't need it, but you need to do it. I do believe Jesus was here laying down a principle for us.

So let me bring this into modern understanding. First of all, foot washing was a servant act. Second, it was a cleansing act.

Then it was a welcoming act. It was an honoring act. It was a soothing act.

I'm convinced that when we do something that is servant-hearted, other-centered for others, that is cleansing, that is welcoming, that is honoring, that is soothing, in a very true sense, we have washed their feet. So here they are. Jesus gets up and begins to wash their feet.

I have a personal theory that He began with Judas. Then goes to John and heads over toward my good friend Peter. Peter's watching this.

I know what he's thinking. He's thinking he's giving us a test, and they're failing it. Wait till he gets to me.

And so, when Jesus begins to make his way over toward Peter, Peter says, Oh, you plan to wash my feet? Jesus said, You don't understand now, Peter. You'll understand later. The lack of understanding had never slowed Peter down before.

And Peter says, You'll never wash my feet. Why do you suppose he said that? I think I know. I think he was remembering, for one thing, back when Jesus had asked them, Who do they say I am out there? And they told him.

And then he asked, Well, who do you say I am? And Peter got it right. He said, You're the Messiah, the Son of the living God. And Jesus said, Way to go, Peter.

Flesh and blood didn't tell you that. Your brain bone had nothing to do with it. The Father has revealed that to you.

I can see Peter folding his arms saying, Hey, you guys hear that? I get revelations. Revelations are great, folks. But they're dangerous, too.

And it was dangerous for Peter. It went right straight to his head. Jesus began then, at that point, to teach about the difficult things that he was going to have to go through.

And Peter became an advisor to God. I can see it. Come here, God.

Now look, you quit talking like that, you hear? You don't have to go through that stuff. You're God, remember? I told you. And I'm on your side, remember? And I get revelations.

That's when Jesus had to say, Get behind me, Satan. You don't know the things of God, just the things of men. I imagine Peter thought, Boy, I hope the guys didn't hear that one.

But I'm just like Peter. If I got a revelation like that, tomorrow I would start the Gail Irwin Revelation Ministries Incorporated, complete with a magazine and my picture five times a page. I think he was remembering that moment and trying to make up for it, almost, and saying, Lord, you'll never wash my feet.

And I think he expected Jesus to say, Way to go, Peter. Come on up here higher. Judas is about to leave anyway.

But that's not what he said. He said, If I don't wash you, you have no part with me. No fellowship.

My good extremist friend Peter caught that rapidly and he said, If that's true, Lord, wash my head, hands, armpits, everything. Jesus said, No, if you've had a bath, if you're clean, you don't need another one. You just need your feet washed.

Oh, man. Did I need to hear that? When I was growing up, no, I never grew up. When I was younger, I had the most massive set of guilt that you've ever seen.

And any time an evangelist said, I want every head bowed and every eye closed, while the choir's softly singing just as I am without one plea, if you're here tonight, and I was. I helped out a lot of statistics in those days. Boy, I needed to hear this.

Gail, I've given you a bath, but your feet keep getting dirty. Some of you came here tonight with dirty feet, didn't you? Maybe things didn't go well today. Maybe your relationships were just a little out of kilter this afternoon, and, man, you got here tonight and you felt dirty, didn't you? Feet were dirty.

Maybe things aren't well on your job, and so it just grinds your teeth most of the time when you come to church and your feet are dirty. The church I last served, I knew my people very well, and on Sundays, my eyes would march down each pew, and I'd go over their week because I knew them. And some of the men worked under heavy ethical pressure.

When they'd come home, they'd feel so dirty. Some of them would come home to relationships that were not in order. They'd come to church feeling so dirty.

Some of them lived in neighborhoods that would vex anybody's soul, and they'd come to church feeling so dirty. Some of the women worked under heavy sexual harassment. They'd come to church feeling dirty.

Now, here they are. What is my job? You know, I once thought, God help me, I once thought my job was to point out dirty feet. You've got dirty feet.

You've got dirty feet. And I realized that people with dirty feet already know that. So then I progressed, quote, unquote, to thinking I was in charge of a giant fire hose to wash feet.

I discovered I was knocking feet clean off legs and sweeping them out the back door. I couldn't understand why my people left crippled. Finally, God got through to me and said, Gail, if you're going to wash feet, you have to get close enough to people to touch them.

Oh, yes. If I don't wash you, you have no part with me, no fellowship with me. Incredible.

Let me draw you a picture here right quick. What does this look like to you? Sort of looks like church. Very good.

Actually, it's a bus. Isn't it amazing how buses and churches look alike? I mean, there's a marquee up front that says we're all going in the same direction. Maybe first heaven-bound bus.

There's a professional up front in charge of getting us there. We come in and we sit down facing the front in our little pew. That's a good word, isn't it? Pew.

Any of you ever have to ride a bus? Is it your favorite form of transportation? No. I did an all-night bus ride in India several years ago. Everyone ought to do that once.

The bus filled up. I thought I would have a seat all to myself, but I didn't. I had to share it.

I resented it. What if the bus driver stopped this bus in the middle of the wilderness and said, now folks, we're a different sort of bus. We're a friendly bus.

We're going to take some time here for you just to get to know each other. We're going to have a time of fellowship. We would have had a riot.

I didn't get on this bus to get to know anybody. I got on this bus to get somewhere. Now get me there.

I've seen that in church. I didn't come to church to get to know anybody. I came here to get to heaven.

Now get me there. What takes the bus and turns it into the body? Foot washing. When we begin to become servant-hearted, cleansers of one another, welcomers, honorers, soothers of one another, then we become the body.

Until then, we're just a bus. Well, Jesus finished washing their feet. And he said, you call me Lord and Master? And he says, I am.

And he says, I've washed your feet. Boy, I think they knew that. I think the last word spoken was that of Peter.

After that, all you heard was a splash of water and a swish of a towel as the Son of God washed their feet. Awesome. And he says, I'm your example.

Boy, that's in our list, isn't it? Where have we heard that before? Number three on our list, isn't it? I'm your example. You should do as I have done. You ought also to wash one another's feet.

Hey, he doesn't leave us a lot of option here. He doesn't say, hey guys, now if it doesn't interrupt anything and you think about it, you might possibly give some thought to perhaps washing feet. No.

He says, you ought to do it. Wow. We have no option but to be servant-hearted, cleansers, welcomers, honorers, soothers of one another.

We have no option. And then Jesus closes this passage by saying something that's so encouraging to me. He says in verse 17, if you know these things, or you could say since you know these things, blessed are you if you do them.

Blessed are you if you do them. Oh, this is a guarantee. I like guarantees when God gives them.

I have bought items with guarantees that, well, I bought one that had a lifetime guarantee and it broke and I took it back and I said, that's its lifetime. But when God guarantees, count on it. When he says, you'll be blessed, blessed are you, you can know you'll be blessed.

Now, because of that, I so want you folks to be blessed tonight. I've made arrangements for us to have a foot-washing service now. Oh, you should see your faces.

Oh, don't worry, I'm not bringing out the buckets. But as part of our exit from here tonight, I want you to find someone or two or three, and if you get carried away, a couple of thousand will do, and make them feel served, welcomed, cleansed, honored, soothed. Well, how can I do that? You might say.

It's really very easy. Sometimes a smile will do it, won't it? Sometimes a handshake, sometimes an embrace, sometimes an affirmation of what Jesus is doing in our lives, a compliment, or some other way. But you can find it.

I think the Holy Spirit will help you. So that's your ticket to leave, otherwise you have to spend the night. You've got to make someone feel served, or cleansed, or welcomed, or honored, or soothed.

And you'll be blessed. So you can't do this sitting down. Now let's stand.

Get out your buckets. Get your towels. Are you ready? Go! God bless you.

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