

From Simon to Peter #20 - a Major Lesson in Humility

by J. Glyn Owen

Jesus' actions in John 13 demonstrate his humility and symbolize the salvation he has come to effect, emphasizing the importance of surrender and submission to his will.

Duration: 47:30

Scripture: Zechariah 13:1, Matthew 6:33, John 13:1, John 13:8, Acts 22:16, Ephesians 5:26, 1 John 1:9

Topics: "Simon to Peter"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher focuses on the passage in John chapter 13 where Jesus washes the feet of his disciples. The preacher emphasizes the contrast between Jesus' attitude of humility and service and that of his disciples. The physical action of feet washing is seen as a symbol of the spiritual cleansing that Jesus offers to those who repent and turn away from sin. The preacher encourages the listeners to follow Jesus' example of humility and service in their own lives.

Transcript

This morning we are turning to that very wonderful passage that Mr. Lowe read for us in John chapter 13. And I'm grateful to the Lord for guiding the choir this morning to choose a hymn which was so appropriate to this theme. The Lord obviously knew the way we were going and guided them in that way.

Now we're not going to read the whole chapter again or the whole passage but I shall be referring to it as we proceed. Thoughtful readers of the gospel narratives find themselves repeatedly awestruck as they meditate upon the immense privileges of those first twelve disciples who accompanied their incarnate Lord in the days of his flesh. One scene of exquisite beauty and of meaning and significance leads on to another and yet to another and there is no end to it.

Coming to this incident itself, I'm sure that most of us concluded at first reading that here we have a very simple incident, sublime but simple. Now I want to suggest to you that here in John chapter 13 verses 1 to 17 we really have one of the profoundest of all biblical passages. The fact is, Jesus Christ is speaking and acting here on two levels at one and the same time.

He is speaking and he is acting on two dimensions at one and the same time. He is speaking and acting on the level of the physical. We have the feet washing and the conversation that goes on between him and

Peter.

Peter who stubbornly refused to allow his Lord to wash his feet for a while. We have that level but we have also a deeper level. And this is what makes this passage a little difficult to expositors.

They have wondered which way to go. There is this obvious physical side to it but there is this something else. Now I take my cue from that this morning and I want to come to the passage looking first of all at the physical action and then going behind the physical to the spiritual implications that are so obviously found here.

Now let's start then with the physical action. You will notice if you have your New Testament open before you that the writer, St. John, takes some considerable pains to fill in the context. Now this is significant.

Whenever you find this in Scripture, I would suggest to you, you should sit up and take note. Here is this writer, he's using at least three verses, the best part of three verses before he comes to the point. And what he's doing is providing the context, the background.

He wants us to see things in their context. In other words, he's telling us Jesus is going to do something very remarkable. To appreciate what the Lord Jesus is going to do, you need to see the context.

You need to get the background. Now what is that context? Well, John brings two main elements before us. In the first place, he's got a lot to tell us about the consciousness of Jesus.

What was he thinking about? What was going on in his mind? What was in his heart? As he set about washing the disciples' feet, the consciousness of Jesus. Now if you have your Bible open, you will notice that there are certain things very clearly enumerated here. Now before the feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that his hour was come, that he should depart out of this world unto the Father, that's the first element in his consciousness.

With his eye on the calendar in the first place, the feast of the Passover has come, he had another eye on God's timepiece. He knew that his hour had come. Other people didn't know.

He did. He knew that the moment had struck when he is about to move into those climactic experiences of his upon earth, in which he is going to give his life as a sacrifice for the salvation of sinners. The hour has come.

Until now he's been waiting for it. He refused to do certain things, so we read in the Gospels, because his hour had not yet come. But now he says, the hour has come.

The first element in our Lord's consciousness is this then. At this Passover, there is something singular to take place. My hour, the one mighty hour, unrepeatable, upon which the destiny of men rested.

That hour has arrived. The second element in our Lord's consciousness is this. Despite all the failures of his disciples and all their foolishness, he's not glad that he's going to leave them.

I don't know how you would have felt if you were in his place. Might not some of us have said, well, good riddance to leave people like this behind. They've been taught so much, they've been with us for three years or so, and they've learned so little.

And even when we thought that they had learned so much, the next day reveals that they've not learned it at all. Some of us might have been tempted to say, well, good riddance. I'm going to the Father, let's forget about them.

But not our Lord. Listen to the words. Having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them and still continued to love them right up to the very end.

His thoughts of them were thoughts of compassion. His thoughts of them were thoughts of affection. Out of the depth of his soul, he cared for them now.

With all their faults, with all their sins, with all the disappointments they had given him, he still cares for them. And it is not without pain and displeasure that he can contemplate the possibility of at last leaving them, even to go to the Father. Another element in our Lord's consciousness is this.

Along with that of the time on God's timepiece and of an abiding affection for his followers, he was aware that the battle, the final battle with Satan was about to begin. Satan has already put in the heart of Judas Iscariot Simon's son to betray him. Jesus knew this.

Would to God that we could take this seriously. He knew what was going on in Judas' heart. Men and women, just as he knows what's going on in your hearts and mine this morning, and as he looked into the heart of Judas as only he could, he could see there a sinister something set in motion.

Satan has put the seed there and it's taken lodging and it's about to bring forth fruit. Judas is already bargaining in his heart. How much will I ask to sell my Lord? And then this.

Over again. So that our Lord was equally conscious of his own glory, of his own origin and of his own destiny. You notice how John puts it.

The hour that he should depart out of this world unto the Father, having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end. Supper being ended, Jesus knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands. He's the heir of all things, as Paul puts it.

Everything belongs to him. The whole world is his. And that he was come from God and that he was going to God.

Can we take that in? Our Lord is consciousness of who he is in the purposes of God and of what has been given to him and of what his destiny is. In other words, he is Lord. Now what would you do with a consciousness like that? Well, the second element in the context and in the background to the action of feet washing is this.

Perhaps I can speak of it as the contrast between the attitude of our Lord here and that of his disciples. Having arrived at the unnamed place where this meal was to take place, apparently they began the meal without anyone moving to do what was the usual and the customary chore, namely to wash the feet of the guests. Verse 2 and verse 4 should read like this.

The King James Version is not accurate here. It should read like this. And during supper, supper had started, you see.

He rose from supper, laid aside his garments and garnered himself with a towel and so forth and began to wash the disciples' feet. In other words, they began supper and not one solitary disciple had set about or

had offered to wash the feet of his fellows. Now you say, what has this got to do with it? Well, it's obvious, is it not? In an oriental climate with all the dust at this time of the year, this was a very necessary chore.

It was usually performed by a slave if there was a slave in the house. It was not simply a matter of hygiene. It was more symbolic and a matter of refreshment.

It was a token of welcome for one thing and then it was a matter of physical renewal and refreshment after the heat of the day. But no one did it. And Jesus allowed the supper to begin.

No one had washed his feet. No one had washed the feet of another. Not a soul.

They would not do it. Why? They would not do it because they were intoxicated with the sense of their own bigness and greatness and importance. Oh yes, the disciples of our Lord who've been with Him for three whole years are intoxicated with a sense of self-importance.

They're not going to do the menial service. They're not going to come to stand to that. They're not going to wash one another's feet.

We've seen them over and over again in our recent studies arguing as to which of them is to be the greatest. And you know when once you get into that kind of attitude you're not prepared to wash your brother's feet. But he who is the heir of all things, who came out from God, who is going to God, the Lord of all creation, he can't descend to wash the disciples' feet.

The contrary. Now the second part of this physical aspect takes place or rather relates to our Lord's conflict with Peter. You heard this in the reading by Mr. Lowe and I'm sure you know the passage familiarly.

Everything now seems to center around Simon Peter. That's why I'm taking the incident. We are especially concerned with Simon Peter.

The conflict with Peter. Something happened in Peter's heart when he saw the Lord Jesus dressed like an oriental slave with a loincloth, with a towel around his loins, with a bowl of water in his hand coming to wash his feet. Something triggered in his soul and he said, No, no, no, no, no, no.

Peter frustrated his Lord's physical action. You notice his words. He put it like this.

Peter said to him, Lord, do you wash my feet? Now the authorities will tell you that it's almost impossible to convey the meaning of the original language here. What, says Peter, you my feet, with the emphasis on the you with the one breath and the my with the other. The thing is incongruous.

You my feet? Why does Peter speak like this? What is it that lay at the heart of it? Why is he so upset about it? If his Lord is going to do it, why? Well, it was incongruous. Ah, yes, but there is a deeper reason. When Peter saw his Lord coming to do what he himself had disdained to do, his conscience is beginning to work.

And as he sees the Master about to put his hand on his own dusty feet and wash them, Simon Peter rebels and sees, of course, exactly what he should have been doing. And his conscience is working. His pride is condemned.

In the subsequent confusion of mind, he would frustrate his Lord from doing anything, and he begins an argument, which is certainly not the kind of argument that a Christian should be involved in. So, he frustrates his Lord, and then you notice, he rejects his Lord's promise of an explanation later on. Our Lord Jesus Christ is so understanding.

He doesn't come down like a ton of bricks upon Peter when Peter said, Lord, you wash my feet? Jesus doesn't come down upon him like a ton of bricks and squash him. He doesn't do that. You notice what he does? Right, Peter.

I can understand it may be a bit of a shock for you to see me doing this. I can understand that. Your views of me are such that this is all incongruous to you.

But wait a moment, Peter. Let me tell you. What I am doing, you don't know now.

But afterward, you shall know. In other words, Peter, I know it looks a bit strange to you, but take it from me, Peter, there is meaning to this. There is significance to this.

I have a reason for this, and I tell you, Peter, submit, and you shall have the reason straight from me in the appropriate hour. What was Peter's response? You know, one is ashamed to say it because it's so often the response of our hearts. We can't think that our Lord may have a reason for doing something that we don't know about.

Oh, we acknowledge him to be the Son of God, the Messiah. But when it comes to the point and he does something that we don't understand, we simply can't believe that there can be an explanation. And so Peter said, Not on your life, he says.

You shall never wash my feet. Explanation or no explanation, I don't understand this. You see the point? Peter is rattled.

A man with a guilty conscience is so easily rattled, and he doesn't think sanely, and he doesn't think squarely. Now, any pastor knows this. Any good Sunday school teacher knows this.

There are times when people get just rattled, and they can't talk sense. They may be the most sensible people, but when their consciences are aroused, you've just got to let go. It's only the Lord can deal with people then.

Peter, you see, was humble enough to see the evident incongruity of his Lord washing his feet, and yet he was proud enough not to accept his Master's promised explanation in due course. Proud enough to say, There can be no reason for this, that I don't understand. But Peter did yield.

Can I very briefly remind you how? You see, our Lord Jesus Christ is very understanding, but let me say this. He is King. And when once the Lord Jesus Christ begins to work in a life, he will pursue that life.

With one means or another, Jesus Christ will be Lord. This is a concept that we have lost today. Men seem to represent the Lord Jesus Christ as a beggar at the womb of every man and every power.

My friend, my Jesus Christ is Lord. The Christ of the Bible is Lord. And having dealt reasonably with Simon, and Simon not being amenable to reason, you notice what Jesus does? He tells him, Simon, if I wash you not, then you've got no part with me.

And what the promise would not accomplish, the threat did. Now, our Lord Jesus Christ is very, very slow in making threats. There are times when he has to do so to nations and to groups of people and to individuals, and he does it in the New Testament.

But his normal method is to throw out his promises and to say to us, look, here is my promise. Believe me. Receive me.

Obey me. Here's my promise. But with his disciples, with his disciples, with his people, when his promises fail, his chastisements begin.

And so he says to Peter, Peter, he says, look, you and I cannot go on in fellowship together unless I wash your feet. I've a reason for doing it. I say to you, I'll give you an explanation in due course.

I've a reason for doing it. And if you don't submit, then you and I cannot go on in fellowship together. You remember what Peter does.

You see, Peter loved his Lord all right. But now that his conscience is aroused, as I said, he doesn't think clearly. And so he's not in total control of himself.

He doesn't know exactly what to do. But he loved his Lord. He loved him.

And he simply could not think of life separated out of fellowship with his Lord, even though the cross is on the way, even though all the ignominy and the shame is right there around the corner, better dying with Christ than live without him. Now I know he will do many things inconsistent with that out of his sheer impetuosity, but this is Peter's heart. He loved his Lord too much to think of living or of dying without him.

And so he comes, bless him, and he goes from one extreme to the other on a complete vault of house. The Lord, he says, not my feet only but also my hands and my head. Take me all over.

Wash me all over, he says. Give me a bath. Now he's equally irrational there and thoughtless.

But wait a moment. There is a point there. There is total capitulation.

There is utter abandonment. There is a yieldedness. He says, Lord, all right then.

I didn't accept your promise of an explanation by and by, but my, I take your threat. And rather than contemplate living out of fellowship with you, take me as I am. Do anything to me you like.

And I imagine him presenting his body, as it were, and saying, Lord, my head, my hands, my all. Now there is the startling physical action that we have here in John 13. Now worried only for that, I think it's a wonderful story, don't you? I think it's a wonderful episode, not just a story but an episode, historical.

And it must have electrified those disciples just to see their Lord in the consciousness of who he was and what he had come to do, washing their feet. But now we come to something which is deeper, the spiritual significance or the spiritual application, as our Lord makes it later on. We began by saying that the episode appears to have two different dimensions.

Indeed it does. Now for those of you who may want to have an explanation for our saying this, give me just a moment. This becomes very evident, very evident, from the point when Jesus says to Simon Peter, what I am doing you do not know now.

Now get the point, get the picture. Here is Jesus coming with the water and the towel to wash Peter's feet. Peter knew what he was going to do physically.

It was obvious the stage was set for this. There could have been no mistaking about he's coming to wash Peter's feet. But Jesus said, what I am doing you do not know.

In other words, Peter, there is more to what I am going to do than meets the eye. I have a reason for doing this that you know nothing at all about. There is a significance to it which you simply do not comprehend or understand.

Now, you see, we're moving on to a different plane now. Something beyond feet washing. There's something else here.

Peter knew all that, but that fact, that fact of there being a deeper significance becomes even more evident when we hear Jesus say to Peter, a little later on, Peter, if I do not wash you, you have no part with me. Now, it is not necessary for any man at any time to allow the Lord Jesus to wash his physical feet in order to have fellowship with him and have a part with him. This was never a condition of discipleship.

When Jesus called the disciples, he didn't say something like this to them, look here, you come after me, let me wash your feet and then we'll be friends and we'll walk in fellowship. He never said that. Neither does he say today.

But he says this, except I wash you, you have no part with me. You see, it is evident that Jesus is speaking about something that's bigger, something that's greater, something that is beyond the mere physical experience. Neither is this kind of thing strange to any reader, any student of John's Gospel.

In fact, it is typical of Jesus' approach, as John tells us. In John 3, he speaks of spiritual birth and spiritual life. In John 4, he speaks of spiritual thirst and spiritual water.

In John 6, he speaks of spiritual hunger and spiritual bread. Ah, he says I'm the bread of life. Very well then, he's doing exactly the same thing when here in John 13, he speaks of spiritual uncleanness and of a corresponding spiritual cleansing.

That's what he's getting at. The thing that Peter doesn't know anything about is this, is that Jesus is doing something that is symbolic or parabolic. Now, what message have we got here? What is the message of this act? What is the spiritual message? What is the deeper level of it? I want to say two main things this morning.

The first is this. First of all, the simple physical action of feet washing was symbolic of the salvation which Jesus had come to effect. For salvation, viewed from one point of view, is nothing other than the washing away of the filth of sin.

And the washing of which we speak in this passage is symbolic of another washing that Jesus had come to make possible in the hour that is now taking away. Five times between verses 5 and 10, we meet the verb to wash. We also once meet the verb to bath or to bury.

And we also have the adjective clean here. The whole passage has to do with becoming clean, becoming bathed or bathed or washed. Now, behind the physical act whereby Jesus rose from supper then, became appropriately clad for the task, behind all this, we see his spiritual condescension.

His coming away from the supper table, his dressing like an oriental slave, is typical, is symbolic of something bigger, of his condescending as the Son of God to become the Son of Man, of his laying aside the glory that he had with the Father before the world was and coming down to the dirty feet of his miserable creatures and to our dirty hearts. It is symbolic of his greater condescension coming with a washing, coming with a cleansing and purification of something on a deeper level than dirt. Neither is this a revolutionary concept.

As I've been reading this passage and going into the Old Testament background this week, I've been amazed at the number of times the Old Testament speaks of salvation in terms of washing or of cleansing. The illustrations are too many to quote. Can I just give you one from the Old Testament? Do you remember this? Zechariah chapter 13 and verse 1, thinking of the messianic age that was yet to come, the prophet said, On that day there shall be a fountain opened for the house of David and for the inhabitants of Jerusalem to cleanse them from sin and from all uncleanness.

What is the Messiah coming to do? He's coming to purge away the iniquity of the human heart, to open a fountain. That's what that lovely hymn is based upon. There is a fountain filled with blood drawn from Emmanuel's veins and sinners plunged beneath that flood lose all their guilty stains.

Salvation is cleansing. My friend, I speak to you reverently this morning that the most damaging dirt is not the dirt that clings to the hand or the face or the feet, but it's the moral pollution that seeps into the crevices of the mind and the imagination and the heart and the soul. There is none other tincture under heaven this morning but the provision of the Christ of the cross who can cleanse the heart and the mind and the spirit of men born in sin and who've lived in it.

The New Testament goes on, therefore, to speak of salvation in precisely these terms. It's very old-fashioned this morning. I know I'm speaking of something which sounds terribly old-fashioned, but it's biblical.

And you know, our business is not to be up with the fashion. The fashions will go to hell if they're not in line with the fashion of God. We have an abiding and unchanging word, and our task is to expound the unchanging word of God.

God says to men, you need a cleansing. None other can provide that cleansing but Christ my Messiah, mine appointed Son in his death. And so the New Testament speaks of it in these terms.

Listen. Peter, for example, he says that God made no distinction between Jew and Gentile in the dispensing of gospel benefits. Quote, God who knows the heart bore witness to them, that is, the Gentiles, giving them the Holy Spirit just as he did unto us.

And he made no distinction between us and them but cleansed their hearts by faith. And the implication is this, that the same God cleansed the hearts of the apostles and the disciples. Salvation is being cleansed.

It's being made clean. The apostle Paul says exactly the same thing. He reminds the Ephesians that Christ loved the church and gave himself for it, or for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water by the word, the washing of water by the word.

The church must be a cleansed community. There is no man, there is no woman who belongs to the true church of Christ who is not washed. Are you washed this morning? Nice, clean, lovely-looking people.

Now, I don't say things like that very often, do I? Perhaps it's under the canopy here. You all look such a magnificent sight. But, my friend, I ask you what God only knows.

What about the dirt in the heart? Are you clean? Are you clean, man? Are you clean? Paul tells Titus the same thing. He saved us, he says, by the washing of regeneration and by the renewal of the Holy Ghost. Salvation is a cleansing, then.

The epistle to the Hebrews, I have no time to go on to it. The first epistle of John, they speak in exactly the same language. The blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanseth us from all sin.

What a song for the soiled communities of earth. He cleanses us, he makes us clean. Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as wool.

Though they be red like crimson, they shall be whiter than the driven snow. This is biblical Christianity. This is salvation.

If I do not wash you, says Jesus to Simon, you have no part with me. He wasn't referring to the feet washing. He was referring to the reality symbolized thereby.

You and I must be washed in this, the precious, subterranean blood of Christ, or we have no fellowship with him. And that indispensable washing of which Jesus spoke has two distinguishable features. Can I say just a word about them, and then one other thing, and we're through.

Amazing how Jesus distinguishes here. Peter's complete vault of house expressed itself in offering, as we said, his whole being to be washed. And Jesus pulls him up and he says, no, no, no, Peter.

Sheesh, you don't know what you're doing now. Look, he says, he that is literally bathed or bathed, not washed, it's a different word altogether. He that is bathed needs only to wash his feet and is clean every which.

Jesus says, there are two aspects to this cleansing work that I've come to do in this mighty hour at the Passover. The one is total and unrepeatable. It's like having a bath.

When last did you hear a sermon on this? My friend, the experience of becoming a Christian is like having a moral bath. Not a wash, not going to the wash shop and washing your face and washing your hands, but a bath. And the whole being is submerged in the element and washed and made clean.

And that is unrepeatable, says Jesus. You don't need to repeat that. He that is bathed doesn't need to be bathed again, even though he's got dirty in part.

Now, and he gives us an analogy. Now he says, you may have had a bath before coming out tonight for this supper, but in walking through the grimy dust and sand dunes, well, your feet have got soiled. But what you need now is not another bath.

What you need is this. You need to have your feet washed. That's all.

And this is the second aspect of the cleansing and of the washing of which Jesus speaks. It is local. Local.

And it is repeatable. In other words, just like a man who's had a bath going out with sandals through the dusty street, he gets his feet soiled, well, now he doesn't need a bath all over. He's clean all over apart

from his feet.

What he needs is to wash his feet. My dear Christian people, you and I walking through this world of sin on all hands, though we've been washed in the blood of Christ and are clean, our imagination becomes soiled. It needs to be cleansed.

It needs to be washed like the feet. Our thoughts become impure. Our consciences become impure.

And there are elements, there are areas of life that become soiled. Now, says Jesus, what you need then is this. It's this localized application of the cleansing blood.

And this has to be repeated as often as the need arises. Will you allow me to say it this morning? I believe that here in this lovely Convocation Hall, Jesus Christ is coming to all of us, not with a basin of water, but with a blood of his cross. There's not a man, there's not a woman, there's not a father, there's not a mother, there's not a son or a daughter, but that needs it.

Don't push him away like Peter and say with the Pharisees, I've no need of you. I'm clean. If we confess our sin, if we confess our sin, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Will you do that? I bid you, my friend, do that this morning. Jesus is coming to you by the word and by the spirit and even on the wing of my feeble utterances. He's coming to you people of Knox this morning with a blood of his cross to wash and cleanse and purge that we may be a clean people who bear the vessels of the law.

Can I conclude by just referring to this other aspect here? The same simple physical action of feet washing became here the occasion for the expression of the kind of sovereignty which Jesus would exercise at all times over his people. The other thread or two threads that are interwoven into the pattern of this passage are the threads of sovereignty and submission. Now, I'm not going to deal with them at large at all.

I simply want to point to them, but they're absolutely basic. Jesus Christ as sovereign expects the submission of his people. When he comes to, or rather when he came to Peter with a basin of water, he was making a judgment that Peter's feet needed washing.

My friend, as he comes to you with a blood of his cross this morning, he's passing a judgment upon you and upon me. We need cleansing. And as he comes to us with a provision, he as sovereign expects our submission, our acceptance of his understanding of our need and of his provision for our need.

That's the first thing. Secondly here, Jesus Christ as sovereign expects the submission of his people to his will, even when we don't understand quite what he's doing. If he has given us his promise that it is necessary and that he may give us an explanation in due course, you know, that should be enough for us.

As sovereign Lord, he expects his blood-bought people to believe him. Now the man of the world can't do this. But the man in whose heart the Spirit of God is and the new nature is, the man of God should.

We may oftentimes cry with the disciples, Lord, increase our faith. But I tell you, my friend, this morning, if you're a Christian, Jesus Christ expects you to trust him. As the sovereign Lord, he has certain expectations from you and from me.

Though we don't understand what he's doing, if we know him well enough, we know he's always going to reason. And then finally, Jesus Christ as sovereign expects the submissive devotion of his people to his own example of lowly service. You call me teacher and Lord, he says, verses 13 to 15.

And you say, right, for so I am. If I then, your Lord and teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example that you also should do as I have done to you.

The vocal, verbal profession of Christ's disciples demands a correspondingly practical expression. When we become a Christian, we acknowledge Jesus Christ as the prophet, the teacher come from God, the one in whom the Father's will is revealed, the only Teacher, the Teacher with a capital T that is involved in the Christian profession. When we come to him and we trust him as Savior, we inevitably, whether we realize it or not, we are trusting one who is Lord.

Very well then, if you call me, you do right, he says, you do well to call me teacher and Lord, for so I am. But if you call me that, then listen, I've set an example for you. If you mean what you say, then I am authorized and I am capable of telling you the kind of lives you ought to live.

Very well, he says, just as I have washed, yea, even as I, your Lord, have washed your feet, you ought also to wash one another's feet. I tell you that with the authority of the prophet come from God, of the Teacher. But I command you, I am your Lord and you call me Lord.

Very well, if I am your Lord, do what I bid you. Now some people have gone to the extreme of believing that it is necessary for us physically to wash one another's feet at all times, and some people do it in public services especially. Perhaps it's a little bit of window dressing, I don't know.

Is that a harsh judgment? But what I would say is this, if your brother needs you to wash his feet physically and needs it, then we should do it physically. But whether the physical need applies or not, we ought to get down to serve one another in a lowly situation. That's what the Master is saying.

If there is need to serve your brother by getting down and washing his feet, do so physically. And over and above that, there is an attitude of condescending grace and humility. Jesus says, right, you call me Teacher and Lord.

Now he says, taking this concept of lordship, the servant is not greater than his master. If I am your Lord, then you are my servants. If the Lord has done this, surely the servant should do it.

I sent you. You are the sent ones. The one who was sent is never greater than the sender.

The sender, the divine commissioner of the disciples, he's done exactly this very well then. On all, on all accounts, you, my followers, should do this. Oh, my friends, where are we this morning? Can you see the deeper lesson of this apparently very simple passage? He comes to us with a washing for the soul and the spirit.

The initial washing that is for those who repent and turn away from sin and come to him. The constant washing of the parts that become soiled. Let us, not like Peter at first, but like Peter at the end, willingly receive what the master would do for us.

But he comes as the sovereign Lord and teacher. And he tells us, I've left you an example. Follow me.

May God grant us grace so to do to his glory and to his praise.

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