

# John 13

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Date: 30 April 2023

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[ 0 : 00 ] Do turn, if you will, to John chapter 13 in the church Bibles. I said I hoped to kind of do two more sermons in Psalm 17, but I've been away and the end of this week was chaos.

So I've kind of been working on an article on the three nevers that Peter says to our Lord. So you're going to get the fruit of that this morning.

And then it's something from Hebrews 13 tonight. No Lord. No Lord. Have you ever said that? No Lord. What a stupid thing to say.

How crazy it is to call him Lord and to say no to him. Either he is Lord or he isn't. And if he is Lord, you can't say no to him.

Or maybe you do. Look at Peter in this passage. Look at verse 8. Of chapter 13. Peter says, no, no, no. You will never wash my feet.

[ 1 : 06 ] Never ever. Literally. And not to all eternity, he says. Never in a million years, Lord. And this isn't the only time that Peter says no to Jesus. Three times Peter says no to Jesus.

The most obvious time is at Caesarea Philippi. Where he says no to the cross. Jesus says this is what is going to happen to me. And Peter says no, no, no. That's not to happen.

And Jesus says get behind me, Satan. Now there are many people on there. There are actually many churches that would like to take the cross out of Christianity. Now they'd love to do that.

But Jesus says, doesn't he, to that, get behind me, Satan. Now Peter was one of those people. He said no, Lord. That will never happen to you.

And now he is saying no to having his feet washed by Jesus. He's saying no to a changed life by Jesus, actually.

[ 2 : 07 ] He wants Christianity without cleansing. And it's not possible. It's not possible. It's a really famous episode, isn't it?

John 13. You'll be familiar with it. It's been ritualized and dramatized every Easter around the world. It's inspired great works of art by Leonardo da Vinci.

And Dan Brown thinks he's found a hidden meaning, doesn't he, in the da Vinci code? And people are fascinated, aren't they, by conspiracy theories. Especially if they seem to discredit Christianity. Well, if you've read the da Vinci code, it's absolute nonsense. But I do want to say to you, there is a hidden meaning in this incident, isn't there? I look at verse 7. It says there.

It says what I'm doing, you do not understand now, but afterwards you will understand. There's a hidden meaning. It's not apparent now, but Jesus says to them, it will be apparent later.

[ 3 : 10 ] John's Gospel is written, if you've read it, on multiple layers, isn't it? And they're not arbitrarily imposed, a kind of hidden code within it. But there is, deliberately intended by the author, many levels of meaning.

And we see that in this passage. And so three things, three things beginning with P. First of all, a portrait, then a parable, and then a pattern. Verses 1 to 5, you can see a portrait of Jesus. And then there's a parable of salvation between Jesus and Peter, verses 6 to 11.

And there's a pattern for us to follow. And so writing many decades later, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, and with the benefit of hindsight, looking back on this event, John sets the scene in these opening words.

Look at verse 1. He says this is when it happened. It happened just before Passover. Just before the feast of Passover. And Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart out of the world.

Having loved his own who were with him in the world, he loved them to the end. In other words, John is saying he showed the full extent of his love towards others.

[ 4 : 27 ] In this little passage here, he shows us something of the height and the depth and the length and the breadth of his love. That's what this story is.

It's a glorious little picture. It's a picture of love on its knees. Think of a mother with her small children who've dropped food yet again on the floor. Is she proud to her children? Does the mother boast of her accomplishments to her kids? No, of course not. A mother might be very proud of her children, but she is never proud to her children. Because love is not proud, is it? Love is not puffed up. Love does not stand on dignity. So think of even the most powerful, high-flying executive. When he's with his grandchildren, he'll get down on his knees to play, won't he? It's what love does. Love stoops. And that's what Jesus demonstrates in the upper room. [ 5 : 33 ] He knows, verse 1, his hour has come. He knows that it's now time for him to go to the cross. All through John's Gospel, if you read it, you're told the hour has not yet come. The hour has not yet come.

And then you get to chapter 13. The hour has come. And he knows it's time. It's Passover time. It's going to be time for him to lay down his life as a sacrifice to God for the sins of his people. The time has come for him to go to the cross. The time has come for him to leave this world and go to his Father. And he knows in verse 3 that the Father has given all things into his hands. And he knows that he's come from God. And he's going to go back to God. And knowing that, knowing all who he is and all that he's come to do in the world, he comes down from the table. And he takes off his outer clothing. And he wraps a towel around his waist. And he washes the feet of his disciples. And that's what's being painted for us.

[ 6 : 36 ] Love doesn't stand on ceremony. Love gets down on its knees to meet the needs of loved ones. And that's what you see here, isn't it? That is the hidden meaning in this painting.

Love which brought him down. Love which brought the creator into his creation. Love which brought the one who flung the stars into space.

Love that brought him who was always at the Father's side in glory to the feet of smiley disciples. The him, it wasn't the nails that held him there.

It was his love. For you and for me, having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the very end. He saw it through. Probably the best commentary on John chapter 13 is Philippians chapter 2, isn't it?

Philippians chapter 2, which says this about him. Jesus Christ, who though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped.

[ 7 : 48 ] But emptied himself by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of man, being found in human form. He humbled himself, becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

Joseph de Vista was a missionary in 19th century Hawaii. It's the worst places to go as a missionary. But he was a missionary to the leper colony on the island of Molokai.

You might have seen the film. There's a film out about it. One morning, he was preparing to take a service in the leper colony, when Damien actually spilt boiling hot water on his bare foot.

It took him a minute to realize what had happened. He realized that he hadn't felt anything. And realizing what that might mean in a leper colony, he poured more boiling water on his foot, on the same spot, and there was no feeling whatsoever.

That morning, he went to church, and he opened the service, not in his normal way, dearly beloved, or welcome to IPC, good morning. He opened the service with these words, my fellow lepers, my fellow lepers.

[ 9 : 02 ] What a demonstration of love, isn't it? It's one thing to go to a leper colony to minister to lepers, but to die a leper's death, my fellow lepers.

Isn't that what Jesus has done for us? Isn't that what is being demonstrated in this passage? It's telling you that he is a friend of sinners. He is numbered with the transgressors.

And that is baptism. We've often thought of it, don't we? He joins the queue of sinners to be baptized by John in the Jordan River, confessing his sins.

Jesus is in line with them. Jesus is numbered with the transgressors, even though he was not a sinner himself. He was numbered with the transgressors on the cross.

We're told he became sin for us. He who knew no sin became sin. It's him that I used to sing when we were growing up.

[ 10 : 09 ] It's borderline heretical, but it's brilliant. Listen to this. How willing was Jesus to die that we fellow sinners might live? The life they could not take away.

How willing was Jesus to give? But Jesus was not a sinner, was he? He was not a sinner. And yet, in identifying himself with us, he became sin for us.

Our sin was laid on him. He was numbered with the transgressors. Having loved his own, he loved them to the limit. He loved them to the end. And so what you've got in this passage is a beautiful portrait of a servant king who stoops to meet your need.

What you have in that upper room is a prefiguring of what he will do at Calvary. It's a picture of love on its knees. How far love will go. How love far will go to meet the needs of people like you and I. And the answer is this. He will go all the way. Here's the second thing that I want you to see. That all who are loved by Jesus are washed by Jesus. And what I mean by that is there's an interchange between Jesus and the eleven and you see a parable of salvation.

[11:25] It's a parable of salvation. Peter says, doesn't he, just look with me at John 13 again. Peter says when Jesus comes to him with the bowl and the towel, verse eight, you will never wash my feet.

Never ever. Not a chance, Lord. And Jesus answered him, if I do not wash you, you have no share with me. It's not about hygiene.

It's not about COVID and counting in 20 seconds while you wash. It's about holiness. It's a parable. And Jesus is taking the social conventions of the day and he's preaching the good news, the gospel to Peter.

The streets of Jerusalem were filthy. Not only with dirt, but probably with sewage as well. And the streets were a thousand times worse at Passover because the city swerved to about five times its normal size.

And so if you went into someone's house on arrival, there would be someone to wash your feet. And maybe it would be a household slave or the lowest in the whole household.

[12:39] And Jesus says to Peter, let me do that for you. Let me be your servant. Let me wash your dirty, smelly feet.

And it's too much for him. What you, you wash my smelly feet? Never. Not in a million years. You'll never wash my feet.

And Jesus says, unless you let me wash you, you will have no part in me. That's the same word, the word part in me, that's used in the prodigal son.

So the younger son goes to his dad, doesn't he? And he says, give me my share in the inheritance. Give me my part. Before he goes and he kicks off the traces. It's the same word that was used for Israel when they came into the promised land.

When they were given a share, when they were given a part of the promised land. It's the same word that's used in Revelation. When we will have a share in the tree of life as part of the holy city.

[13:43] And Jesus says, unless I wash you, you'll have no share in what I came to do. In other words, Peter, if you recoil, if you draw back from what I'm doing now, then you're rejecting the very principle on which my kingdom is founded.

You reject this, you reject me and everything I stand for. Because, Peter, if you think that washing your feet is offensive, how much more are you going to find the cross of Jesus Christ offensive? If you're too proud to let me wash your feet, how will you ever accept my death on your behalf? My atoning sacrifice for you.

And if I don't wash you, Peter, you will have no part with me. No share in what I've come to do. And that's the offense of Christianity. That's the offense of the cross.

Unless I wash you. Christianity is about being washed. Christianity is about having your sin cleansed and your sin blotted out.

[14:56] And that's our problem. I want to ask you, how's that happened to you? Have you come to Jesus to be cleansed from your sin? Or are you too proud to do it?

Some hymns that we sing, when you think of them, they're so odd, aren't they? Foul, I to the fountain fly, wash me, Saviour, or I die.

Foul? A bit extreme. You sing, I'm foul? The dying thief rejoiced to see that fountain in his day, and thereof I, though vile, as he washed all my sins away.

Vile? Vile? Is that what you're saying? And our problem is Peter's problem, that he is too proud to admit that he's got a problem.

And many of us are like that, aren't we? We refuse to admit that we need to be cleansed. And we need to be washed.

[16:00] And we need to be made fit for the company of Jesus. I'm not that bad. I'm not that bad. I'm not that bad compared to others. I'm a decent person. It's too humbling, isn't it?

And pride is so very subtle that it can invert itself. And so most of us, like Peter, we are far more comfortable, aren't we, with what we can do for Jesus than what he can do for us.

And in fact, a lot of people, they think that's what Christianity is all about, don't they? They think that Christianity is all about doing Jesus a favor. It's all about trying your best.

But Christianity is not about what you do for Jesus. It is about what Jesus has done for you. And so we see this all the time, don't we, in churches.

We can be really happy serving and doing this and doing that, but we hate to be served. It's one of the hardest things, isn't it? I'm told about growing older.

[17:08] That you can't do what you want to do and you can't serve as you used to serve and instead, you have to let other people serve you. And instead of people depending on you, you are dependent on them.

But that's a great picture of what Christianity is all about. It is all about what Jesus has done for you. And Jesus says to Peter, unless I wash you, you've completely missed the point altogether and you've got no part in what I've come to do.

And at which point, Peter, in kind of characteristic fashion, does this great backflip, doesn't he?

Look at verse 9. He goes from one extreme to the other. He says, Lord, not only my feet, but also my hands and my head.

First, he protests about washing at all. I don't need to be washed at all. And then he says, I need a bath.

And what he needed was to have his feet washed. And Jesus says to him, Peter, actually, you don't need to have another bath. You need your feet washed. If I come to your house for lunch today and somebody comes in from the kitchen and they say, dinner's ready, feel free to wash your hands, and I say, actually, I'm just going to pop in the shower, you would think, wouldn't you, he's a very, very odd man.

[18:36] Because you would hope that I showered before I came to church, which I did. Not when you arrive at someone's house for dinner. It would be weird, wouldn't it? Dinner's ready, I'm just going to jump in your shower.

No, what do we do? We wash our hands. I shower you to do that before you left home. And in their case here, it wasn't their hands, but their feet, and they needed their feet to be washed, and so do we.

Because as the people of God, as the people of God who have trusted in Christ, we have been forgiven wonderfully. We've been forgiven. If you put your trust in the Lord Jesus Christ, you have been saved, you've been regenerated, you've been born again.

But you still need your feet washed. And as we walk through the dirty streets of this world, week by week, we pick up all sorts of yuck on our feet, and we come week by week, don't we, needing to confess our sin.

We know that. Every day, it's a parable. Jesus is speaking in language that they could understand and you can understand to point you to the cross. to show your need of what he's about to do for you, to wash away your sin.

[19:50] You don't understand, he says in verse 7, but you will later understand. When later, on the other side of the cross, at the deepest level of how we're to understand it, it's a parable of salvation.

A.M. Hunter, a New Testament scholar, says this, he says, there is no place in Jesus' fellowship for those who've not been cleansed by his atoning death. Many people today would like to call themselves Christians, but see no need of the cross.

Ready to admire Jesus' life and praise his teaching, and even perhaps like Gandhi, follow his example, but they cannot bring themselves to believe that Jesus died for their sins. And that's the gospel.

There is a fountain that is open to sin and uncleanness. There's a fountain filled with blood. It's such peculiar language, isn't it? Blood drawn from Emmanuel's veins and sinners plunged beneath that flood lose all their guilty stains.

The dying thief rejoiced to see that fountain in his day, and there may I, though vile as he, just like him, wash all my sins away. That's the good news.

[ 21 : 01 ] There's a once and for all-ness about it, isn't it? There's a once and for all-ness about the death of Christ and forgiveness that no one need to spare. But there's an ongoingness that none of us should be complacent.

In the atoning sacrifice of Jesus on the cross, there is complete cleansing for your sin that is past, that is present, that is future. When you put your trust in the Lord Jesus Christ, he washes you completely from toe to toe.

And so that when God looks at those who put their trust in his son, he doesn't see you in your sin and your dirt anymore, he sees you justified, right with him.

Completely clean, washed. He gives you a bath, he cleanses you from all your sins, but there's an ongoingness as well, isn't there? Think of King David and what he did, how he lived a lie and committed adultery and murder until Nathan the prophet comes and challenges him and he is convicted of his sin.

And in Psalm 51 he says, Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love, according to your abundant mercy, blot out my transgressions, take them away, wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, cleanse me from my sin, hide your face from all my sins, blot out my iniquities, creating me a clean heart.

[ 22 : 32 ] And renew a right spirit within me, cast me not away from your presence, restore to me the joy of your salvation, and then I'll teach transgressions your ways.

Sinners will be converted to you. David had fallen into the mud and the muck of sin, he'd lost the joy of his salvation, that's his testimony, and the prophet comes and says, you're the man.

Do you remember what John says later on, in 1 John, he says, if we confess our sins, if we own up to our guilt, if we open up the closet, take the skeletons out and say, Lord, this is who I am, God will what?

God is faithful and just. He will forgive us our sin, and he will cleanse us from all unrighteousness. There's a once and for allness about the death of the Lord Jesus Christ, and there's an ongoingness.

The truth of the Christian life is we need to keep short accounts with God, don't we? We can't become blasé about walking through this life and the mud on our shoes.

[ 23 : 50 ] We need to be cleansed and ongoingly cleansed. John Sott, I think, really helpfully compares the two sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper.

He says this, he says, you're baptised once. I think that's really important. You need to be baptised once in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. There's one baptism, the Bible says. You don't get baptised over and over and over again because when you do that, you're misrepresenting the gospel.

Baptism is a sign and seal of our regeneration, of our need to be born again. It's a sign of your justification, of being declared right with God by faith in Christ.

You're baptised once, but you come to the Lord's table frequently, don't you? And every time we come, we examine ourselves. You need to know what's going on.

You need to know what's happening. And we examine ourselves. That's what we need to do because at the Lord's table, we keep short accounts. we keep coming back for cleansing and forgiveness and feeding.

[ 25 : 02 ] Those who've had a bath only need to have their feet washed, Jesus said. And Jesus says, you are clean. You're all clean, but not all of you, not every one of you.

Of course, he's referring his knee to Judas. Look at verse 11. For he knew who was to betray him. That's why he said, not all of you are clean. try and think yourself into this scene for a moment. Judas scares me. Judas frightens me because I can easily see myself doing what he did. Jesus saw the miracles.

Judas saw the miracles, heard the teaching. He'd been with Jesus every day. He was the treasurer of the twelve. He witnessed the wisdom, the kindness, the patience, the consistency, the goodness, and the love of Jesus.

He was an insider. He was a disciple. That's scary, isn't it? It's possible for you this morning to be in church and not to be in Christ.

[ 26 : 10 ] You can read your Bible, you can pray, you can talk the talk, you can look the path and not be saved. It's possible to be close to Jesus and not be with Jesus.

You are clean, Jesus says to his disciples, but not all of you. And I think when Jesus said that, that one of you will betray me, I think there were eleven frightened men in the group.

In that room, don't you think? The other gospel writers tell us that the other disciples began to say, is it I? Is it I? Is it me? And I think that's the right response.

I guess there were eleven frightened men in that room, but there was one who wasn't. And Judas wasn't frightened because he'd already made up his mind. He was going to walk out on Jesus and betray him.

He'd already done the deal. And so this morning, let me say this to you, if you are frightened by Jesus here, then you jolly well ought to be. And if you think that could so easily be me, that is a very good sign.

[ 27 : 22 ] That you are spiritually alive. And your conscience is working properly. And if you're not frightened at all by these words, then you really ought to be.

Decades later, as John writes this gospel, he can still see Judas disappearing, the silhouette against the door. He disappears out of the door, verse 30, into the night.

He immediately went out into the night. He surrendered to his greed. He's in league with the devil to betray his Lord. And it was night. It is darkness. He walks away from the love of Jesus into the darkness.

Into the darkness of a Christless eternity. him. And so be warned. Don't be Judas. Make your calling and election sure. Love portrayed. Love betrayed.

Love displayed as an example for us to follow. Love displayed as an example for us to follow. Most people, when they come to this passage, go straight here.

[ 28 : 32 ] It's the first thing they see, and it turns out to be the only thing they see. And so they see, ah, here is an example to follow. Verse 12. When he washed their feet and put on his outer garments and resumed his place, he said to them, do you not understand what I've done to you?

You call me teacher and Lord, and you are right, for so I am. If then I, your Lord and teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet, for I have given you an example. You know, a sense of occasion, some people have it, and some don't.

Some people get the dress code right at a party, others don't. And here, the apostles, the disciples get it wrong. They turn up to the Last Supper, and they are arguing amongst themselves, who is the greatest?

It's a remarkable thing, isn't it? I am the greatest. No, no, no, I am the greatest. No, no, no, I am the greatest. They were arguing about who's going to get the top jobs in Jesus' kingdom.

Who's going to fulfill the top positions? James and John have even got their mum to put in a good word for them, much to the disgust of others. They're jockeying for position. And as Jesus prepares to lay his life down for them, they are competing and comparing themselves with each other.

[ 30 : 02 ] the evening meal is being served, verse 2, and normally the feet are washed before the meal. but obviously there's no servant girl because it's hired room.

Somebody's not done their job. Anyone could have done it but nobody did it. There was an important job to be done and everybody was sure that somebody would do it.

Anybody could have done it but nobody did it. Somebody got angry about that because it was everybody's job. Everybody thought anybody could do it but nobody realized that everybody wouldn't do it.

It ended up that everybody blamed somebody when nobody did what anybody could have.

Welcome to the upper room. And the tragedy is it's often like that in a local church, isn't it?

There's a job to be done but nobody wants to do it. Somebody ought to have done it. Anybody could have done it but nobody did it. Why don't they do something about it?

[ 31 : 08 ] Who are they? Anybody could have done it nobody did it until Jesus he got up wrapped himself in a towel and stooped down to wash their feet. And he does for them what they were too proud to do for themselves.

There's no household slave and all the guests are too self-important to do that so Jesus does it. He who is lord of all becomes the servant of all. How embarrassing.

Twelve red glowing faces in the dark. And the silence is deafening. I'm breaking the silence Jesus says do you know what I've done for you? I've set you an example. I've set you an example.

How do you learn to write? You learn to write in school? You learn to write? How do you learn to write? Do you remember? What do you do? You get little letters and little dots and you copy them.

Is that right? Is it still like that? I think it is. And so you do that.

[ 32 : 16 ] You do that. You follow the lines. that. You may well be teaching Sunday school. Maybe volunteering for little stars.

Maybe washing dishes. Maybe cleaning toilets. Maybe giving your time. Jesus says I've set you an example. 30 years later when the apostle Peter came to write his first epistle he said Christ suffered for you leaving you an example.

In his steps yes he died a substitutionary death. Yes he died to wash our sins away. And that's the most important thing. But he also died giving us an example.

And as you see the image of Jesus kneeling with a towel wrapped around him stooping to wash his disciples feet. It's so ingrained in Peter's mind that he says in chapter 5 clothe yourself with humility. He says this is the way that I want you to do church. I've set you an example. Let me wrap up. As I finish let me ask you this question.

[ 33 : 24 ] Are you saying no to Jesus? Is there anything in your life and Jesus is speaking to you about it? at least in your heart probably not out loud you are saying Tim no Lord never.

Not in a million years. Don't go there. Don't go there. Anything else but don't go there. And Jesus is saying to you this morning that's the very thing I want to talk to you about.

And that's the very thing that you need to change. Let's go there. And perhaps you're here this morning and you're not a Christian but you're definitely interested and you see the advantages of Christianity and you want Jesus as an example you think he'd be great for the kids but you don't want a relationship with him.

You don't want him as your Lord and saviour. And you can't bring yourself to admit that you need a saviour and that you need to be washed because you stink like I do.

And that's the reason he came into the world to rescue. So don't say no to him. Don't walk out on him like Judas.

[ 34 : 35 ] Let's pray.