

TEXT:¹

So I'll tell ya upfront here, I have been begging God this week to give me words this morning/I ask God for that every week, but this week specifically I've felt particularly burdened to be able to show you just the amazing depth of what's going on in this passage. BECAUSE, not only, is it SO iconic within both Christian tradition and Jesus' life and ministry as a whole, BUT it's a passage that marks a very important transition IN *John*; specifically from Jesus having been focused on showing the crowds what *allegiance* to God looks like...to NOW *instructing* His disciples - you see there in *vv.1* and *15*, on the night before His death and by way of example. *Instructing* them ABOUT what He, and life, and by extension they/WE are to be about. That's what Jesus is doing here! Knowing that His death is imminent/knowing that seasons of darkness, doubt, discouragement are inevitable for you, He's giving you a concrete example here that you can put in your back pocket and pull out DURING those seasons, as a way of stabilizing your faith in Him. As He says there in *v.19*, "*I'm telling you this now, before it takes place, that when it does...you may BELIEVE I am he.*" So a REALLY foundational passage here that shows us *2 exceedingly important Things*: *First, that the PRIMARY way in which God relates to you/ the primary way...is love*: And you see this in so many different ways throughout this passage, not the least of which is simply that on the night before Jesus is going to, literally, ascend to the heights by DEscending to the depths/the night before He's gonna pull off the greatest victory of all time BY himself being captured, tortured, and murdered, *what does He do?* As *v.2* shows, He invites His boys to enjoy a shared a meal. Welcomes em in! Practices hospitality...In her book, *The Gospel Comes With A House Key*, Rosario Butterfield says that, "*hospitality is ground zero in the Christian life*" *Why?* BECAUSE hospitality/welcoming-in is precisely what God has ALWAYS done for us. Going all the way back to Adam and Eve being created and welcomed into God's paradise-presence...Then AFTER them Israel literally being formed and continually welcomed-into God's presence through the sacrificial system of the OT...And then still after them, sinners, just like you and me, whom Jesus was said to be "*a friend of,*" and who ultimately served as the foundation of the church, literally welcomed-in as the people of God CALLED to welcome-in others along with em. This is what God's always done for us. And so the very context of hospitality in which Jesus is instructing His disciples here is ITSELF an instruction... A reminder, right off the top, that God's posture WITH you, is always lovingly TOWARD you!

And if you keep going, you see that even MORE in the actual act of foot washing, which Jesus says there in *v.8* is emblematic of "*having a share with Him,*" literally being brought into life with Him. That's what He's doing here. He's symbolizing, in this foot washing, what He's ULTIMATELY gonna do in His death and resurrection, which is take your sin and Himself become unclean, so that YOU can be MADE clean - made righteous through faith in Him. That's why one commentator calls this example here, "*a symbolic prefigurement of Jesus' cleansing sacrifice at Calvary.*" ...Cuz see, proper eastern etiquette at the time, taught that guests, who after becoming dirty from journeying through dusty, grimy, manure-covered streets, should, on arrival

¹ Works Consulted:

- Bruce Milne, *The Message of John: Here Is Your King!: With Study Guide*, The Bible Speaks Today (Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993), 196-200
 - Merrill C. Tenney, "John," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: John and Acts*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelin, vol. 9 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1981), 136.
 - "The Love of Jesus - The Fruit of the Spirit - The Character of Christ" - April 26, 1998 - John 13:1-21 // "Kneeling Love - Gospel of John, Part 1" - September 29, 1991 - John 13:1-17 - Timothy J. Keller, *The Timothy Keller Sermon Archive* (New York City: Redeemer Presbyterian Church, 2013).
 - "Faithless Faithfulness" - Episode 78 - Jan. 10, 2023 // "Betrayers & Deniers Alike" - Episode 79 - Jan. 17, 2023 - The Larkcast

at someone's home, have their feet washed. Cuz if you'd likely been wearing sandals/walking on roads like this all day, there was nothing you needed more than to have your feet cleaned. But of course that being a particularly "low task," especially when you consider that feet are almost universally felt to be the least attractive part of the human body/especially dirty feet - that task then would only ever be done by NON-Jewish SLAVES. Meaning it was considered so low of a task that Jewish rabbis taught that if you had a Jewish slave, you couldn't make em do it. It had to be a Gentile slave... ***And yet, what do we have here?*** We have not a Gentile slave, but JESUS/ a Jewish rabbi/THE Jewish rabbi washing the feet of his pupils... You realize, there's no place in ancient Jewish OR Greco-Roman literature where you have a master washing the feet of his pupils. This is crazy, which is WHY you see there in **vv.6 and 8**, Peter say, "*No way Jesus! We're not doing this. You're God. You don't wash my feet. NEVER!*" It's shocking! And honestly, it's SO shocking that throughout history people have been divided as to exactly what you're supposed to see here. Cuz certain people look at this and say, "*of course what you're supposed to see is the **humility** of Jesus.*" That He's willing to get down and serve people like you and me, IN SPITE OF who HE was. That while HE'S the one who deserves honor, He's nevertheless willing to put that honor aside, literally KNEEL down, and perform this incredibly low task. The **humility** of Jesus toward us, which of course is ultimately epitomized by His crucifixion or what the Apostle Peter described in **Philippians 2** as, "*humbling himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, EVEN death on a cross.*" The **humility** of Jesus toward you.

But then others say, "*No, no, no. What you're supposed to see is the **endurance** of Jesus WITH you.*" Cuz of course, it's not just that Jesus served in spite of who HE was/though that's incredible; it's that He served in spite of what He was FACING. Cuz again, this is the night BEFORE He's about to be crucified and He KNOWS it. That's why **v.1** says that "*when Jesus KNEW his hour'd come.*" Jesus, KNOWING He's about to die, nevertheless and voluntarily serves!... ***You ever had a big test or job interview/job proposal due the next day? What do we always do before those big moments?*** We kinda clear everyone and everything out **right?** On the eve of these big moments, ya hunker down in your study/the library/a coffee shop maybe, and ya kinda block out everyone until it's done **right?** That's what we all do. And that's for GOOD things!... Jesus though, on the eve of the WORST thing, doesn't clear everyone OUT. He brings everyone IN. Even in the face of incredible suffering, He's nevertheless present with and thinking only of your needs. So it's not just that He's serving in spite of who HE is, but serving in spite of what He's FACING. Just incredible and loving **endurance!**

But then still others say, "*No, no what you're REALLY supposed to see is not the humility or endurance of Jesus, but the **forgiveness** of Jesus.*" Cuz notice in **vv.2 and 7** there: ***Who's in this group of those being served BY Jesus?*** Two unlikely parties **right?** **First**, ya got the disciples, who despite having been with Jesus for 3 years now, still don't, as He says, "*understand what He's doing in the moment.*" ***You see that?*** You gotta believe had to've been at least a little bit disappointing to Jesus. That the night before His death, they still don't get it... So they're in this group, but so too is... Judas **right?** Judas Iscariot! The one who ultimately betrayed Jesus by turning Him over to the religious authorities. He's in this group too! And according to **vv.18 and 20** there, Jesus KNOWS Judas is gonna betray Him. ***And yet, what does He do? BOTH for the***

disappointments AND the denier? He still washes their feet *right*? Cuz it doesn't say that Jesus washed the feet of 10 or 11 of these guys. No! He washed em all. When He came to each of these guys in whom He'd invested so much, but who still didn't get it, He nevertheless knelt down and washed their feet. And TOO, when He came to Judas/to the feet of the person about to arrange his execution, He still knelt down and washed. Just the amazing **forgiveness** of Jesus! That He doesn't just serve in spite of who HE is, or even in spite of what He's FACING...but serves in spite of who THEY are! Think about that: You know someone's gonna drop the ball on that project at work/even worse backstab ya. **What do you do?** You get out ahead of it *right*? And depending on how badly that person's gonna drop the ball or backstab ya, ya might even block em out. You CERTAINLY don't serve em...unless of course you're Jesus, who literally offers love to BOTH those who don't always get it AND those who REFUSE to get it! In other words, to you and me! The **forgiveness** of Jesus!

So which is it? Are you supposed to see His **humility**, His **endurance**, or His **forgiveness**?...Yes! Because of course, all of those things are a part of REAL love. And if you look in **v.1** you see THAT'S what this is about! Jesus doing ALL this, including ultimately the Cross, out of a desire as it says, "to LOVE you to the end!"...In other words, love you in ways WAY deeper than our culture understands. **Cuz ya know, on the one hand**, our culture defines love as simply **tolerance right**? If ya really love someone you'll accept everything about em. But look, we understand, that's not really love. Love doesn't just accept everything ESPECIALLY things that might be unhealthy for a person. E.H. Gifford once said, "the more a father loves his son, the more he hates in him the drunkard, the liar, and the traitor." If you see some kind of dirt, grime, SIN in a person's life, real love for them would move you to NOT accept it, but rather wanna "WASH" it off. So with Jesus, we're talking about a love for you that's WAY deeper than mere tolerance... **And on the other hand**, WAY more than mere **romance** too. Cuz romance/attraction is generally how WE define love *right*? Ya love people you're attracted to...But notice, JESUS displays love by literally washing the most UNattractive part of these guys. Cuz what He's trying to say is: This isn't about you or me being attractive or being able to make yourself attractive and therefore God loving you. No! This is about God loving you BECAUSE He's loves you! Dr. Martyn Lloyd Jones used to say it perfectly, "God doesn't love you because you're lovable. He loves you because He loves you...and THAT makes you lovable."...It's like bitcoin/hear me out: You and I are like bitcoin. **Cuz you remember some years ago what caused bitcoin to initially spike in value?** It was the investment of people like Elon Musk and Jeff Bezos *right*? In other words, the value of bitcoin was arbitrarily driven up by the opinion of valuable people. Because when people of worth ascribe worth to something, that SOMETHING becomes worthy...The same is even more true for you. When God, who of course is of the utmost worth, loves you, YOU become lovely/worthy. Just like bitcoin! The only difference being YOUR value isn't arbitrary. Your worth/your acceptance can't tank during say, a "down economy of your sin." **Why?** Because in Christ, God has "loved you to the end." Made you, as **v.10** says, "completely clean."

And see Friends, that's the Gospel: The Gospel/**listen**: is that right now you are more wicked, depraved, and dirty with sin than you ever dared imagine. BUT at the very same time, you're more forgiven, washed, and loved by God, than you ever dared hope! Because on the Cross,

Jesus, the perfectly clean one/the one in the REAL position of honor, effectively knelt down, put His honor aside, and allowed Himself to be made totally UNclean, so that by mere faith in Him you can receive His righteousness, and thereby only ever need, as **v.10** says, to have “*your feet cleaned,*” which is to say, have God occasionally help you overcome certain dirty-problem areas in your life, precisely BECAUSE He already loves you. THAT’S the reality!

And can I tell you: When you really take that in/as Jesus says there in **v.12** really “*understand what He’s done*”/how He relates in love to you, it changes everything! Cuz ya notice in **vv.12-18**, Jesus draws out the application OF this example. He says, “*If I, your Teacher and Lord, have washed your feet, so you should wash one another’s feet.*” And then goes on to explain the logic behind that. **But you know what the keyword in those verses is?** It’s the word “if.” “*IF...I your Teacher and Lord have done this!*” See, a Christian is somebody who thinks, “*IF He did this...then...*” In other words, a Christian is not someone running around burning themselves out trying to serve and help people, thinking THAT’S Christ-likeness, all the while hoping that God’ll therefore love and accept you. No! That’s pursuing Christ-likeness while failing to understand what Christ is actually LIKE! Cuz it’s the other way around. It’s/a Christian/**listen**: is someone who says, “*if every moment of every day Jesus is relating to me in love/loving me, undeservedly so, in both the things He brings INTO my life AND the things He withholds FROM my life - just always serving, washing and loving me as it were, then how can I not do the same for others?*” ...That’s what it means to understand what Jesus is doing here and HAS done on the Cross. It means, you’re letting how He’s loved you, DAWN on you. So that you then begin to base the way you not only see yourself, but others, ON that love. So not just loving people, for example, who are in some way attractive to you, but actually loving and serving people who might be quite UNattractive, precisely because you realize THAT’S how Jesus loves you. As Paul said in **Romans 5:8**, “*God has shown His love to us in that while we were STILL sinners, Christ died for us.*” ...I mean, this changes everything!

And YET, if we’re honest, we miss it all the time **don’t we?** Which very briefly and in closing here, is **The OTHER thing this passage shows us:** Not just that love is the primary way in which God relates to you, **but how easy it is to miss that love...just like both Judas and Peter.** Cuz I think people’ve done a disservice to both of them. EITHER demonizing Judas/thinking him to be this unusually awful person because of **v.2** there saying that the “*devil put something in his heart.*” OR lionizing Peter and thinking him to be this unusually awesome person because of his apparent humility in **vv.6-9**. **But ya know what the reality is with both of em?** They BOTH miss the love of Christ! Cuz sure, there WAS something particularly evil and black about Judas. But recall, when PETER said to Jesus in **Matthew 16**, “*I don’t think you have to die Jesus,*” Jesus said to HIM/**remember?**, “*Get behind me...Satan.*” In other words, Judas, Peter, ANY of us/ANYTIME you’re not just DOING wrong things, but BELIEVING wrong things about who God really is, you’re being used by evil forces/pawns of Satan, as it were. So Jesus can say that “*the devil put something in Judas’ heart*” BECAUSE Judas was believing wrong things about who He was. EITHER believing that Jesus WASN’T, in fact the Messiah, and therefore SHOULDA been sold-out in the end. OR more likely, as many scholars think, believing He WAS the Messiah, but needed provocation in order to overthrow Rome. It’s quite possible that Judas

sold out Jesus in an attempt to speed UP Jesus and force His hand in overthrowing Rome. Either way, that's why Jesus can say that *"the devil put something in his heart."* Because He wasn't believing Jesus to be a **God who relates to us in love**/who would actually deal with the sin of the world by forgiving it, rather than overpowering it...And likewise, it's why Jesus can call Peter *"Satan."* Because Peter too, didn't believe Jesus should go to the Cross. And HERE, doesn't believe Jesus should serve Him. Cuz of course that grates against our law-loving/fix-it-ourselves/have-something-to-bring-to-the-table hearts **right?**...Peter too is believing wrong things about who God is as a God of grace and love, as opposed to contracts and resumes we so often assume He relates to us through. **So you see?** You can't demonize Judas and lionize Peter...because BOTH miss it! Because WE'RE like both...in that, we too, have SUCH a hard time imagining God to be so low, so close...so loving!

So see, what this tells us is not only how easy it is for ANY of us to miss what God is REALLY like - **how loving He actually is** - BUT that when you DO, AT BEST you're unable to truly love others. Because instead of, as Jesus says there in **v.10**, understanding that HIS love *"completely washes and cleanses you,"* you necessarily feel the need to try and make yourself clean through things like serving others! But that only means you're not serving people for them, you're serving them for YOU! Using em. Which we know brings all kinds of brokenness into the world...And at WORST, you'll be a kind of pawn for Satan, EITHER cuz you're unwilling to simply rest in the "finished" love of Jesus, thinking you need something more than that, which Satan is happy for you to think, OR because you're passing onto others, that something more than mere faith is always needed in order to either gain God's love, or just fix the world, which Satan is also happy to have you pass along. Cuz be sure, he does not mind a person wholly dedicated to all kinds of "noble causes," that have no roots in helping people receive and rest in the love of Christ Jesus...So Friend, don't miss it! Don't miss the love of God. Cuz it's been put on full display not only in this foot washing demonstration, but ultimately in Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection of which this foot washing was *"a symbolic prefigurement."* Don't miss it!...
Let's Pray...