

Washing the Disciples Feet

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Preacher: Mike Wenzler

- [0 : 0 0] So as you heard Al pray, Mark has been sick. And thank you, Mary. I came up here on Saturday and Mary was up here practicing. So thank you very much for filling in.
- As we've said before, it's always a good thing when your pastor takes vacation because that means your church is healthy. And it's also a good thing because we get to hear from other pastors in our area.
- And we get that privilege this morning with Mike Wenzler, who is bringing the word to us. And Mike is an RUF pastor, and I'm going to let him kind of fill you in a little bit more on that.
- So please go forward, Mike. Thanks. Good morning, everyone. Sweet to be with you. Thank you for having me. I thought it was funny earlier when Jim made the comment that, you know, thank God that your pastor will be back next week.
- You know, and I feel that too. Amen and amen. It really is a privilege, though, to get to travel and to worship with other congregations in the state here.
- [1 : 0 7] My wife and kids who are not here, unfortunately, my wife's out of town and my kids all have strep. But, yeah, I wish next time we'll bring them along and you can meet them.
- But we've been in Fort Collins now for 18 months doing RUF at Colorado State University at CSU. So RUF probably, I know some of you have some familiarity with it, but it's the college ministry of the PCA.
- Started the same year, roughly, the PCA started and spread out of the southeast and now has reached beautiful lands of Colorado. And so we have one at CSU and one at Air Force Academy.
- Maybe you've heard from Jeff Kreisel. Has he been here to preach before? I think I'm seeing some nods. Yeah. So please don't compare me to him because that will not bode well for me. But he's a great guy.
- He's a friend of mine. I love Jeff. And, yeah, so this is a sweet thing. So I'm not on staff in a church and I don't have to, I don't have responsibilities at our local church in Fort Collins. So I can travel and I'm not dearly missed necessarily.
- [2 : 1 0] And so this morning we're jumping into a passage that is not in any series that you've been going through. But we're going to be looking at John chapter 13. Probably a well-known passage to many of you, the washing of the disciples' feet.
- And I will open up my Bible, read the passage for us, pray, and then we'll get started. I think it's also in your bulletins. This is John 13.
- Now before the feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart out of this world to the Father, having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end.
- During supper, when the devil had already put it into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray him, Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come from God and was going back to God, rose from supper.

He laid aside his outer garments and, taking a towel, tied it around his waist. Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel that was wrapped around him.

[3 : 18] He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, Lord, do you wash my feet? Jesus answered him, What I am doing you do not understand now, but afterward you will understand. Peter said to him, You shall never wash my feet.

Jesus answered him, If I do not wash you, you have no share with me. Simon Peter said to him, Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head. Jesus said to him, The one who has bathed does not need to wash except for his feet, but is completely clean.

And you are clean, but not every one of you. For he knew who was to betray him. And that was why he said, Not all of you are clean. When he had washed their feet and put on his outer garments and resumed his place, he said to them, Do you understand what I have 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 that you also should do, just as I have done to you.

Truly, truly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. If you knew these things, blessed are you if you do them. Let me pray for us, and we'll get started.

[4 : 28] Father, I thank you for this Lord's Day, to gather freely to worship you. We thank you for the sun, for the fresh air, for the mountains, and for the freedom to sing to you, to hear from you, to pray to you.

Lord, I pray that your word and your spirit would be at work in all of us here this morning. I pray that we would leave here changed, made to be more like Jesus, encouraged in our faith, comforted as we are afflicted.

Please be at work in us. Please give us your Holy Spirit and understanding. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Amen. Amen. This past July, I was down in Dallas for some RUF staff training.

We have two mandatory staff trainings a year. One's in December, one's in July. And the July one is in Dallas. We got off a few hours early, one afternoon, and a few of my other campus minister friends and I decided to go to Elm Fork Shooting Sports and shoot a skeet course.

Any of you shot a skeet course before? Two of us in the room. That's great. I had never done it. I had never done it before this, but it was a pretty sweet experience.

[5 : 41] So everyone gets a shotgun. We bought 100 shells, and we got a golf cart, which holds the shotguns, which is just kind of cool. And we drove from station to station to shoot clay pigeons.

You know, there's one man is shooting, and the other person is operating the little buttons, and there's two different buttons, and you can decide to shoot them at the same time, or, you know, one after another, or totally two different times.

And then you try to shoot them, and they're hidden, and they come flying into course of view, and you're supposed to shoot them. Now, in years past, when I was younger, I grew up in Wisconsin. It's where we were living before my family and I moved to Colorado.

And on vacation, we often went up to Door County, Wisconsin, Washington Island. If you think of Wisconsin, like your hand, there's an island at the tip of the peninsula.

It's Washington Island. And we would often go up there. My grandparents owned some land, and we would stand out on the shore, and we had a hand launcher, and we would, you know, throw clay pigeons and shoot them with shotguns.

- [6 : 42] And I thought I was pretty good at this. You know, I hit maybe most of them, above 50% probably. And, you know, so we came into this time with my friends doing this skeet course, and I haven't shot a shotgun in years.
- Don't own one. And I thought I was gonna, you know, take the cake and show my friends who knows how to shoot some clay pigeons. Well, it turns out, a couple of my friends grew up hunting their whole lives and know their way around a shotgun quite well.
- And they outshot me pretty horribly. I think I hit, if I'm remembering correctly, 16 out of 100 was my number. And the winner was over 50%. I was second to last.
- So it turns out I'm not so good at shooting skeet. My pride, though, had me convinced that I was better than I actually was. My pride had blinded me to the reality of how poor a shot I actually am.
- I thought my little achievements in the past had made me good. Now, pride over shooting guns is one thing, of course, but pride before God is a holy other. And they're very different, but they have similar characteristics.
- [7 : 49] When we compare ourselves to our friends, our brothers and sisters in Christ, we might think we're pretty good. But if we line ourselves up to Jesus, we would quickly see that we're not because our pride has us convinced that we are better than we actually are.
- This is what pride does. It blinds us to the reality that we actually fail to measure up, that we're sometimes stuck up and quite often puffed up. We even think our little achievements in the past make us good and acceptable before God, maybe if we're being honest.
- But Jesus turns pride on its head. In our passage this morning, we see this, and this is really, I think, the big idea from the text. Jesus crucifies our pride through the gospel and calls us to serve others.
- Jesus crucifies our pride through the gospel and calls us to serve others. My outline is pretty generic. It's just context, content, and consequence.
- So that's what we're gonna go through. Three Cs. I ripped that off from a seminary professor from years ago. You can use it in any passage. It's great. Context, content, consequence. Okay, so look at the context first.
- [8 : 58] Let's look at verse one again in your bulletins. It says this. Now, before the feast of Passover, when Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart out of this world to the Father, having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end.
- Now, this story takes place approximately one week before Jesus was crucified. Now, as we heard earlier in the service, Passover was something Israel, the Israelites, celebrated every year to remember what?
- To remember how God rescued them from Egypt. In the 10th and final plague, God spoke through Moses who told the people to kill the spotless lamb, take its blood, literally put the blood over the doorposts of every Israelite home in Egypt.
- And when God looked upon, or the angel, looked upon this blood, he would pass over that home knowing that the lamb died instead of the people or the firstborn inside of it.
- Now, this is the theological connection that we're making this morning. All of the Bible, according to Jesus in John 5 and Luke 24, is about himself and his work in saving his people.
- [10 : 04] The New Testament calls Jesus explicitly the Lamb of God. So Jesus, in this passage, as they're celebrating the Passover meal, is about to become the ultimate Passover lamb who would die on the cross in the place of God's people.
- Jesus died instead of us. And this is what makes, this is the essence of what makes the gospel actually good news. Someone else died instead of me. So the Passover's here.

Jesus knew that his hour had come to do his work on the cross, that is to suffer and die and rise from the dead and eventually go back to you and ascend to his Father in heaven. Focusing just for a moment on the love that John writes about in verse 1.

This whole passage, if you really step back and kind of zoom out, you can see this, is really a contrast between Jesus' humility and his love versus the disciples' pride and self-conceitedness.

There's a huge contrast in this passage. In the face of their, what you might call, depending on how you're looking at it, annoying pride, in the face of that, Jesus loved his disciples and he loved them to the end.

[11 : 15] I think this really needs to encourage us this morning. If you are a follower of Jesus, the same is true for you. Jesus doesn't think that you are annoying. Jesus isn't frustrated with you.

He isn't hurt by your doubt and fear and selfishness and bitterness and pride. Jesus loves you. And we need to let this sink down deep into our hearts.

Look at verses 2 through 3, continuing in the context. During supper, when the devil had already put it into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray him, Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands and that he had come from God and was going back to God, pausing there for a moment, here's John giving us some more context.

So the devil had already wooed Judas toward betraying him and Jesus actually wasn't surprised by this. He knew this the whole time. Also, we see that the Father had given all things into Jesus' hands.

That knowledge is significant. Jesus knew all that was about to take place. It shows us, teaches us, the only reason that Jesus served his people the way he did is simply because he loved them.

[12 : 25] That is why he did what he did. With all the authority and power, Jesus could have done whatever he wanted to do. But what kept him there, what actually took him to his knees to wash his disciples' dirty feet, what took him to the cross to wash away people's sins was love.

Jesus was confident in who he was and what he was supposed to do. And from that place of confidence and love, we see the craziest thing happen in verse four. And that brings us to our content.

Look at verses four through five. So Jesus rose from supper. He laid aside his outer garments and taking a towel, tied it around his waist.

Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel that was wrapped around him. I just said this was the craziest thing happened, right?

This really truly was in some sense unbelievable and crazy. Washing feet was pretty standard in their day because people wore sandals and animals used the streets as their private bathrooms.

[13 : 29] And you can imagine how dirty, smelly, disgusting people's feet would become. Now normally, the way this works historically is a host would line up a lowly servant, a lowly servant to wash the feet of their guests.

But there was no host and there was no servant in the room with Jesus and his disciples. The obvious choice to wash everyone's feet would be one of the disciples.

but no one moved. The basin was there, the towel was there, no one moved to wash each other's feet. No disciple was willing to stoop down to do the work of a servant and to wash the feet of Jesus and his friends.

The men were too proud. So what happens? The text tells us Jesus, the master and the teacher became a servant. He took off his robes, he wrapped himself in a towel and he washed those nasty feet of his friends.

Herein lies the beauty of the gospel. Our hearts are like those disciples' feet. And the only way for them to get clean is for Jesus to wash our hearts with his blood.

[14 : 44] Only Jesus did this. Only Jesus, contra every other world religion, makes you perfectly clean before God. Only Jesus stooped so low in order to bring you who are truly low up to God.

Recently, Lauren and I hired a babysitter and we were planning to go on a little date night and something we don't do nearly enough and we decided to pick up some cheese and charcuterie from Trader Joe's, great place to buy these things, and head up to the Horsetooth Reservoir just outside of Fort Collins.

I don't know if any of you have been up there and maybe been to that area. And so we stop at Trader Joe's to grab a couple of items and as we were walking toward the entrance of Trader Joe's, we noticed this trail of liquid.

Couldn't really tell what it was. That was heading toward the door and a couple of Trader Joe's employees standing outside sweeping something into the liquid. What is going on? You know, so we stopped and asked them for the story and they tell us apparently someone bought like a 70 gallon, I don't know how big this thing had to have been, jug of olive oil and was taking it from the store and loading it into their trunk, dropped the thing of olive oil, it broke, and then they decided to bring it all the way back to the Trader Joe's and it left this, you know, bloody trail of olive oil all the way from their car all the way into the store.

And so the Trader Joe's employees were taking, I think they got flour and they were sweeping the flour in to absorb, you know, the oil and then sort of clean up the mess.

[16 : 21] You know, you can imagine how nasty that, it didn't look like flour when we saw it, right? It looked like black, dirt, muddy, I mean, because the ground is filthy. Here's the thing, for something dirty to get clean, something clean has to get dirty.

Jesus had to get dirty to make us clean. And this foot washing is symbolic of his greater work of redemption through the cross. Now, Peter was the only disciple bold enough to question what Jesus was doing, which that in itself is hard to believe.

How is Peter the only one who spoke up against this, right? Look in verses 6-11. He came to Simon Peter who said to him, Lord, do you wash my feet? Jesus answered him, what I am doing you do not now understand, but afterward you will understand.

Peter said to him, you shall never wash my feet. Jesus answered him, if I do not wash you, you have no share with me. Simon says to him, Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head.

Jesus says to him, the one who's bathed does not need to wash except for his feet, but is completely clean. And you are clean, but not every one of you, for he knew who was to betray him. That's why he said, not all of you are clean.

[17 : 35] So something in Peter knew that what was taking place was backwards. Jesus was his master. How is it that the master is washing his dirty feet?

However, Peter really did miss what was going on here. In his pride and his ignorance, he was blinded to what Jesus was actually doing. Jesus was symbolically, of course, showing his disciples that though he was their Lord and master, truly, he had in fact also become their servant.

He said in verse 7, after I suffer and die and rise again, then you will understand. And Jesus' response to Peter in verse 8 I think is important.

He says, hey Peter, if I do not wash you, you have no share with me. This was true for Peter and you know what? This is also true for all of us here in this room. If we are not washed clean by Jesus, if our sins are not taken from us and put on him, if our faith and his completed and perfect work is not there, then we have no part of him, that we are still dirty and our pride is still keeping us from God.

One commentator, now past Anglican theologian and pastor, wrote this. He said, perhaps there is no sight so displeasing in God's eyes as a self-conceited, self-satisfied, self-contented, stuck-up professor of religion.

[19 : 07] How about consequence? Let's consider how this comes to bear on our own lives. Let's continue on. Look at verses 12 through 17. When Jesus had washed their feet, put on his outer garments and resumed his place, he said to them, do you understand what I have done to you?

You call me teacher and Lord and you are 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 just as I have done to you.

Truly, truly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them. Here's what this means for us.

We are Jesus' servants. He is our master. We need to be okay with being called servants. We are Jesus' messengers. He is the one who sent us.

Now, here's an argument from the greater to the lesser. If Jesus has served us through the greatest act of service, you could say, in the history of the world, how much more ought we to serve one another?

[20 : 15] If Jesus, the greatest person ever, through the greatest act of service ever, served us, how much more should we, his lowly servants, serve one another? So first, I think here's how we respond to this.

Number one, if you're here and you're a Christian, you need to rejoice. We need to rejoice in this. That Jesus, the greatest servant ever, who literally has control and power and authority of all things, has served you by giving up his life and elevated you who are truly lowly up to God, we need to rejoice.

We need to spend some time today and this week rejoicing in the Lord. Read some, to help you do this, read some celebratory psalms where the psalmists rejoice in the Lord.

It's a great way to help us rejoice. I think of Psalm 84 where the psalmist says, one day in his courts is better than a thousand elsewhere. Let's read these psalms and put words to this and rejoice in the Lord.

Second, if you're here this morning and you do not consider yourself a follower of Jesus, please know that this is truly good news and it is for you. I would encourage you to grab hold of this by faith, which is in a sense, simply put, what faith is and let Jesus serve you and cleanse you and bring you to God.

[21 : 33] And a third way this applies to us is we need to serve one another. We need to serve one another and primarily this serving is oriented to brothers and sisters in church.

Yes, we are to be servants to the world, but primarily the way the New Testament authors speak of service is aimed at brothers and sisters. The Apostle Paul wrote in Romans 12, do not think of yourself more highly than you ought.

So you graduated from an impressive university. You work harder than anyone you know. You make more money than most of your friends. Your children are intellectually gifted and amazing at sports.

You're more adventurous and fun and brave than others. You've hiked more 14ers than the rest of us. You're more attractive and in better shape. You're more committed, more holy, more knowledgeable in your faith.

Though these things be true, do not let them puff you up and keep you from serving others. Do not let them hinder your love for others and do not think of yourself more highly than you ought.

[22 : 43] We need to be willing to wash our neighbor's feet. be quick to admit our own sins and repent. Be ready to take a break from your old plans.

This is your own personal plans, particularly hard for me. I'm a three on the Enneagram. I don't know if that means anything to you. I'm an achiever. I love to like check boxes and be very disciplined by nature.

It's hard for me to change my schedule from what I want to have happen, but I really do think that serving one another involves changing, being willing to change your schedule to give up some of your own time.

Keep your ears open for your brothers and sisters, particularly in your midst here in this congregation who are going through a hard time and could use a friend to encourage them and help them.

Recently read C.S. Lewis, his book, Four Loves. I think I'm still kind of working through it. He talks about friendship in there. It's some great quotable things. He said, a friend is close enough where you can put your arm on your friend, but not too close where you suffocate them.

[23 : 44] So I think this is just sort of what being a true godly friend is, being in community, serving one another. You just kind of get close to each other. You don't have to say the right thing, but just be there for one another and serve one another when you're going through a time in need.

I got to spend a couple hours on a Monday morning when I was writing this sermon with my youngest two-year-old daughter, Eloise. And at one point, you know, I think I was trying to multitask and watch her as I'm trying to write a sermon.

She basically just is watching her. And Lauren was gone when the kids were, the boys were in school. And I could tell she wanted, she needed to like get out of that, take a little break from the inside. So I said, do you want to go outside?

I'll push you on the swings. And she said, yes, you know. And so immediately she goes and she gathers up her stuffed animals and her loviess and her, what we call her nookie, which is just a brand of a pacifier.

And she kind of gets all of this stuff in her arms and she like walks over to me as if she's ready to go, you know. And I said, okay, honey, we're going to go outside but you need to put all that stuff on the stairs because we don't want to take it outside to get dirty.

[24 : 49] And she like pauses and looks at me and shakes her head no. She did not want to leave her friends, her dear bedtime friends, you know. I said, come on Eloise, you can do it.

Your loviess will get dirty. You have to put them over here. So slowly she puts her little baby stuffed animals down and then she paused and she looked at them, looked at her, she got two little lovey things in her hand.

She put her least favorite one down first and then she looked at her favorite little lovey, it's like a little cloth animal thing she sleeps with. I swear she like kissed it or something but she eventually put that one down too and then turned and came to me and said, okay, you're almost there, you just got to put your pacifier now on the step and then she said, no, she didn't want to do it.

So I had to help her, I had to take it out of her mouth and put it on the step and then we could get her coat on and shoes on and go outside. Now immediately when I finished this little dance with her, I thought, it just kind of dawned on me because I was literally in the middle of writing this.

This is sort of how we are with Jesus. In the gospel, Jesus calls us to leave our pride behind and follow him and serve one another.

[25 : 57] But we don't want to, this is often very hard. We love the glory that comes from our accomplishments. We cling to, we trust in, we boast in our talents and our skills.

And we actually really enjoy, I think if we're being honest, feeling above the people around us. But Jesus crucifies our pride through the gospel and calls us to serve one another.

Let's do this together in faith. Let me pray for us. Father, we give you thanks, we give you thanks for Jesus. We rejoice in him who truly cleans us.

We know we are not perfectly clean. We know we are prideful. We struggle with doubt, with insecurity, with selfishness, with pride, with cold hearts that are very focused on loving ourselves and often not focused on loving others.

we thank you for Jesus who truly washed us clean by his own blood. And now we pray, he did give us an example, we pray that you would help us by the power of your spirit to follow Jesus and serve others.

[27 : 10] Help us to, may this church be known as a church that really serves one another, that loves their neighbor as themselves. Help us to do this. Give us the power by your spirit, we pray in Jesus' name.

Amen. Amen.