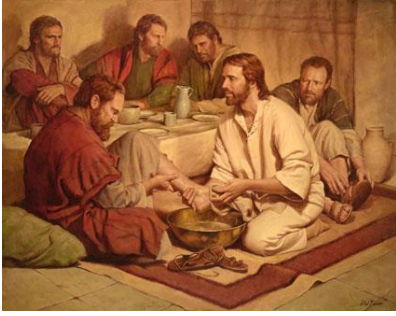


# Why We Wash Feet

John 13:1-20



In the story of the Last Supper we find Christ washing His disciples' feet. The disciples have been with Jesus for three years and have watched many miracles, even the raising of the dead. Thus, they believe they know Him. However, Jesus does one more 'miracle' that even surprises them and sum up his teachings through one last event of love and humility. In Jesus' time, to wash feet was the job of a poor slave. Peter would have none of it! Jesus knew of Peter's prideful heart. A shift was needed. In fact, all of the disciples were going need to partake in this feet washing before accepting their mission to save the world.

Jesus now knows that his hour has come. John stresses the background of the Passover, for the "lamb is about to be sacrificed for the sins of the world" (1:29). That is a component of the narrative, but it is also the instance for Jesus to leave (pass over) from this earth to the Father. For the love that is apparent in the crucifixion is also demonstrated in Jesus humbly lying down of life in the washing of feet. John records: *Jesus got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist* (v. 4). John notes that *the devil had already prompted Judas Iscariot, son of Simon, to betray Jesus* (v. 2).

Luke 23:24

**"Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do."**

Here, Jesus is going to wash the feet of one who is considering betraying him as the devil has *provoked* him or "put it into his heart" (v. 27). Jesus' own understanding of the washing of feet is important. Since Jesus only did what he saw the Father doing (5:19) and this was no exception. Having taken off his outer garment, Jesus was left with his long undershirt (tunic). Slaves dressed similar to serve meals (Lk 12:37; 17:8). He knew this was confusing to the disciples and said "*You do not realize now what I am doing, but later you will understand*" (v. 7). Peter's refusal to have his feet washed lacks humility, which is a critical quality of discipleship.

Luke 22:24-27

**24** And there was also a strife among them, which of them should be accounted the greatest. **25** And he said unto them, the kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and they that exercise authority upon them are called benefactors. **26** But ye shall not be so: but he that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger; and he that is chief, as he that doth serve. **27** For whether is greater, he that sitteth at meat, or he that serveth? Is not he that sitteth at meat? But I am among you as he that serveth.

Definitely, humility is the very object exemplified in Jesus' deed. Peter's worldly view of pride and self-will is the sin for which the cross will heal. In retort to Peter's refusal (v. 8) Jesus says mysteriously, *Unless I wash you, you have no part with me* (v. 8). He responds, *not my feet but my hands and my head!*

Matthew 18:22

**21** Then came Peter to him, and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Till seven times? **22** Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, until seven times: but, until seventy times seven.

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