



Believe

JOHN

MESSAGE

STUDY GUIDE

GROUP MATERIAL

SONGS

Examining the text & our hearts:

1. Overview: An Active Parable Pointing to Jesus' Selfless Service on the Cross

- a. 'The foot-washing in John 13 is an enacted parable of the cross. Unless Jesus washes us, we cannot share his inheritance. If he washes us, we can & do share his inheritance. When John describes the foot-washing, he speaks of Jesus 'laying down' & 'taking up' garments [13:4, 12]. Elsewhere, John uses the same language for Jesus' death & resurrection [10:17]. This is why there's no institution of the Lord's Supper in the Fourth Gospel. The Lord's Supper is a symbol of the cross; the foot-washing in John 13 is the meaning of the cross.' (Adrian T. Smith, *Searching for the Self: Classic Stories, Christian Scripture* 46270;, p.)
- b. '[Jesus' foot washing] is a significant action...It foreshadows the cross itself: the voluntary humility of the Lord cleanses his loved ones & gives to them an example of selfless service which they must follow.'" (Leon Morris, *NICNT: John*, p. 548)
- c. '[Jesus'] act of humility is as unnecessary as it is stunning, & is simultaneously a display of love (v. 1), a symbol of saving cleansing (vv. 6'9), & a model of Christian conduct (vv. 12'17).' (D. A. Carson, *Pillar: John*, p. 359)
- d. '[Jesus carries out the foot washing] during the meal, not on arrival when the feet would normally be washed. This shows that it was an action undertaken deliberately, & not simply the usual act of courtesy. It is a parable in action, setting out that great principle of lowly service which brings cleanings & which finds its supreme embodiment in the cross, setting out also the necessity for the disciple to take the Lord's way, not his own. It is important that we see this. ' (Leon Morris, *NICNT: John*, p. 548)
- e. 'Act II 46270;(Jn. 13-21). As the curtain rises, the writer provides a clue to the meaning of what follows: 'Now before the festival of the Passover, Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart from this world & go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end' (13:1). This enables the audience to see that by washing the disciples' feet & laying down his life Jesus conveys love.' (Craig Koester, *The Word of Life: Theology of John's Gospel*, p. 9)
- f. 'A quick reading of 13:1'17 shows that the episode of the foot washing is turned in two directions. On the one hand, it is symbolic of spiritual cleansing (vv. 8'10); on the other, it serves as a standard of humble service & therefore as a call to all of Jesus' disciples to 'wash one another's feet' (vv. 12'17).' (D. A. Carson, *Op Cit*, p. 357)

2. Jesus Knew (Jn. 13:1-3, 11) – the hour did not take Jesus by surprise – he was in complete control

- a. 'John thinks of Jesus as being in complete command of the situation: He 'knew' that his hour had come. The verb 'know' recurs (vv. 3, 11, 18; 18:4; 19:28) as John brings out this point. 'The hour', did not take Jesus by surprise. He knew that it was this that had now come, & he acted accordingly.' (Leon Morris, Op Cit, p. 548)
- b. '13:1 introduces Jesus' hour & hence the larger narrative of the events of Jesus' death, resurrection, & ascension, but it also introduces the specific events of the farewell meal. It establishes two frameworks for the events that are about to be narrated. The first is an external framework; the events of the farewell meal are located in the context of the Passover festival. The second framework could be called an internal framework, because the Fourth Evangelist enables the reader to view the events of the farewell meal from the perspective of Jesus' knowledge & love.' (Gail O'Day, NIBC: John, p. 613)
- a. That 'his hour' had come (13:1a, 3b)
- a. 'John 13:1 marks a significant shift in the orientation of the Fourth Gospel's narrative. Prior to this verse, Jesus' hour had been anticipated (2:4; 7:30; 8:20) or acknowledged as imminent (12:23, 27), but 13:1 signals its arrival.' (Gail O'Day, OpCit, p. 612)
- b. 'Jesus' hour marks the end of his ministry in this world & his return to the Father.' (Gail O'Day, Op Cit, p. 614)
- a. His hour anticipated (Jn. 2:4; 7:30; 8:20)
- b. His hour acknowledged as imminent (Jn. 12:23, 27)
- c. His hour had arrived (Jn. 13:1a)
- b. That the Father had given everything into his hands (13:3a)
- a. 'The narrator once again takes the reader inside the mind of Jesus (c.f. v. 1).' (Gail O'Day, Op Cit, p. 614)
- b. 'Jesus' knowledge in v. 3 expresses the essence of his ministry: that everything he has is given to him by God.' (Gail O'Day, Op Cit, p. 614)
- c. 'John is about to describe an act in which Jesus will take a very lowly place. But he does not lose sight for one moment of the truth that the highest possible place is his by right.' (Leon Morris, Op Cit, p. 549)
- c. That the devil had put into Judas' heart to betray him (13:2, 11)
- a. 'The events of the last supper are enacted against the backdrop of a cosmic struggle between the powers of good & evil.' (Gail O'Day, Op Cit, p. 614)
- b. 'The stage is set for Jesus to begin washing his disciples' feet. Before proceeding with the narrative, however, John ensures that his readers will grasp just how strongly this episode attests the loving character of Jesus. The disciples whose feet he was about to wash include Judas Iscariot, ... whose treacherous plot had already been conceived.' (D. A. Carson, Op Cit, p. 359)
3. Jesus' Love: To Be Received (Jn. 13:1b, 4-11)
- a. He loved 'his own' to the fullest extent (13:1b) – John has made it abundantly clear that God loves the world – But from here on, his focus is on Jesus' own, those who have embraced God's gift of Jesus
- a. 'Jesus' own are those he knows & loves; they are those in the world who have embraced God's gift of Jesus.' (Gail O'Day, Op Cit, p. 614)
- b. 'If God loves the world (3:16), it is in order to draw men & women out of it. Those so drawn out constitute a new entity, set over against the world: the world loves its 'own', Jesus loves his 'own' (15:19). The object of the love of God in Christ, in these chapters, is therefore not the lost world, but the newly forming people of God, the disciples... Jesus had loved his own all along; he now showed them the full extent of his love.' (D. A. Carson, Op Cit, p. 358)
- d. 'The Fourth Evangelist highlights his understanding of the events of Jesus' hour as the full expression of Jesus' love.' (Gail O'Day, Op Cit, p. 613)
- e. 'The Greek expression used to describe Jesus' love can be translated two different ways... It can be translated as a temporal expression (to the end), or as referring to the quality of Jesus' love (the full extent). The Fourth Evangelist probably intended both meanings to be heard here, because it was in loving his own to the end that the full extent of Jesus' love is revealed.' (Gail O'Day, NIBC: John, p. 614)
- b. Motivated by what he knew and his deep love (13:4a)
- c. Jesus washed the disciples' feet (13:4-5) – Jesus does not deny his person/character by serving his disciples this way – His character makes this act of service even more profound
- a. Laid aside his outer clothing
- a. '...[T]he verb used to describe Jesus' 'removal' of his clothes (v. 4) is the same verb used by Jesus to describe laying down his life (10:15, 17-18; 10:11; 13:37-38; 15:13). The Fourth Evangelist's verb choice thus signals the connection between the foot washing & Jesus' gift of his life.' (Gail O'Day, Op Cit, p. 615)
- b. Took a towel and tied it around himself
- c. Poured water into a basin
- d. Washed the disciples' feet

- e. Dried their feet with the towel
- d. Peter's struggle to receive (13:6, 8a, 9)
 - a. Peter resists Jesus' servanthood (13:6, 8a) – will we allow Jesus to take his role as servant? – Mk. 8:31-33
 - a. 'His 'you' is emphatic, & in the Greek it is immediately followed by 'my,' thus placing the two in sharp contrast: 'Lord, do you my feet wash?'" (Leon Morris, Op Cit, p. 550)
 - b. 'The Greek construction of his question suggests indignant emphasis: 'Are you going to wash my feet?'" (D. A. Carson, Op Cit, p. 360)
 - c. 'To [Peter] it is unthinkable that Jesus should ever engage in the menial activity of washing his servant's feet. So he says that this will never happen. He will have no part in such goings on. 'Peter is humble enough to see the incongruity of action, yet proud enough to dictate to his master.'" (Leon Morris, Op Cit, p. 550)
 - b. Peter relents, but still misunderstands
 - a. 'The hyperbole of the rhetoric draws attention to Peter's continuing misunderstanding of the foot washing. The request that his head & hands be washed suggests that Peter locates the value of the foot washing in the cleansing power of the water & not in Jesus' offer of relationship.' (Gail O'Day, Op Cit, p. 616)
 - b. 'Now we have a characteristic Petrine touch. Convinced by Jesus' words, Peter will not do the thing by halves. Hands & head must be washed as well as feet. Peter may not have meant the words to be taken literally, but as a wholehearted renunciation of his previous refusal to be washed at all.' (Leon Morris, Op Cit, p. 550)
- e. Jesus helps Peter to receive (13:7, 8b, 10)
 - a. You'll understand later (13:7)
 - a. "'Later' is an indefinite time note Jesus does not say when it will be. But he does prophesy that one day Peter will understand what at the present moment is hidden from him...In view of the later teaching in this section of the Gospel we may fairly infer that the primary reference is to the illumination of the Holy Spirit that was necessary, & that would be given (14:26; 16:13).' (Leon Morris, Op Cit, p. 550)
 - b. 'Peter & the others will understand later'or, better, 'after these things'. This does not refer to the footwashing, but to the passion to which the footwashing points. After Jesus' death/exaltation, & certainly after the descent of the Spirit;they will understand.' (D. A. Carson, Op Cit, p. 360)
 - b. If I don't wash your feet, you'll have no part with me (13:8b)
 - a. 'To have a 'share' with Jesus is to have fellowship with him, to participate fully in his life;through the foot washing Jesus manifests the unity & intimacy of God, Jesus, & the believer that marks the full relationship with God (15:1-10)...If one removes oneself from this act, then one removes oneself from Jesus & the promises of God.' (Gail O'Day, Op Cit, pp. 615-6)
 - b. 'One's share with Jesus is the gift of full relationship with him, which he offers in the foot washing, a relationship that opens the believer to;eternal life.' (Gail O'Day, Op Cit, p. 616)
 - c. 'A literal washing of the feet is not necessary before one can be a Christian. The words point us to a washing free from sin that only Christ can give. Apart from this washing no one can be Christ's.' (Leon Morris, Op Cit, p. 550)
 - c. Because you have bathed, only your feet need washing (13:10a)
 - a. 'When 13:10 & 15:3 are read together, it becomes clear that the cleanliness of which Jesus speaks is accomplished by one's reception of Jesus' word, not by the ritual cleansing Peter envisions & requests. In 13:10, Jesus' 'own' are clean through their reception of his enacted word, in 15:3, through their reception of his spoken word. Verse 10 thus supplements Jesus' words in verse 8, focusing attention on the participatory & relational dimensions of the foot washing.' (Gail O'Day, Op Cit, p. 616)
 - b. 'Jesus stated that the disciples were completely clean except for Judas (vv. 10b, 11). What they needed was to have their feet washed by Jesus. In the broader context of the Fourth Gospel, the significance of the foot washing seems to point not just to an example of humble service (as most understand it), but something more – Jesus' self-sacrificial death on the cross;[T]he foot washing then, which they needed to undergo represented their acceptance of this act of self-sacrifice on the part of their Master. This makes Peter's initial abhorrence of the act of humiliation;all the more significant in context; it also explains Jesus' seemingly harsh reply to Peter.' (NET Bible note)
 - d. You are already completely clean (13:10b)
- f. Jesus washing the disciples' feet pointed to his crucifixion
 - a. 'Here, love is expressed in an act of self-giving service (13:1-5). But readers find that the most radical expression of love is the crucifixion, where the Son lays down his life to convey God's love to the world.' (Craig Koester, Op Cit, p. 49)
 - b. 'The love expressed through the footwashing anticipates the love given through the crucifixion. The gospel links the foot washing to the crucifixion by framing the episode with references to the impending betrayal (13:2, 18-30), & by saying that Jesus laid down his garments, echoing what was said earlier about laying down his life (10:17-18; 13:4)... Connecting the footwashing to the crucifixion enables the readers to see that the love Jesus shows in a preliminary way by washing feet, he gives in a definitive way by laying down his life.' (Craig Koester, Op Cit, p. 111)

4. Jesus' Example: To Be Imitated (Jn. 13:12-17)

a. We are commanded to follow Jesus' example (13:12-15)

- a. 'Jesus says, I have set you an example (hypodeigma'the word suggests both 'example' & 'pattern'; Heb. 4:11; 8:5; 9:25; Jas. 5:10; 2 Pet. 2:6) that you should do as I have done for you.' (D. A. Carson, Pillar: John, p. 363)

- b. 'Verse 12 is a rhetorical device, intended to draw the disciples' attention to the central paradox of the foot washing: that he, their master (lord) & teacher, assumed the role of the servant. The one in the position of teacher & lord could expect service from his followers, & the foot washing reverses this pattern.' (Gail O'Day, Op Cit, p. 617)
- a. Not ritualistically
 - b. Not sacramentally
 - a. 'We may reasonably ask if those Christian communities that practice foot washing as a Christian sacrament on a par with baptism & the Lord's supper have understood this passage better than those who find they cannot elevate foot washing to the same plane. We may ask something similar of the formal act of foot washing on Maundy Thursday, when popes, bishops, abbots & others have often washed the feet of junior clergy & sometimes of paupers. Two factors have prevented most Christians, rightly, from so institutionalizing foot washing. First, nowhere else in the New Testament is foot washing treated as an ecclesiastical rite, an ordinance, a sacrament; Wise theologians & expositors have always been reluctant to raise to the level of universal rite something that appears only once in Scripture. Second, & perhaps more importantly, the heart of Jesus' command is a humility & helpfulness toward brothers and sisters in Christ that may be cruelly parodied by a mere 'rite' of foot washing that easily masks an unbroken spirit and a haughty heart.' (D. A. Carson, Op Cit, p. 363)
 - b. Some scholars 'find different sacramental interpretations in Jn. 13:1-20, for Hofius Jesus' death on the cross is the [Sacrament], which is different from the sacraments of the church. Jesus' death on the cross is 'the necessary & fully sufficient condition for their (the disciples') purification from sin' (O. Hofius). For him, the foot-washing does not refer to the sacraments of Baptism & the Eucharist, but rather becomes the sacrament par excellence through which the believers of all time are unified.' [Bincy Mathew, Johannine Foot-washing as the Sign of Perfect Love, p. 26]
- b. We sacrificially wash one another's feet (Jn. 13:16-17; 1 Jn. 3:16)- No follower of Jesus should ever say, 'I'm too good to do that' or 'I'm too important to serve in that way' – & no one is below being served (Judas/traitor) – Not wanting to help Jason & being called out by Sarah
- a. In 1878, when William Booth's Salvation Army was beginning to make its mark, men & women from all over the world began to join. Samuel Brengle, who had dreamed of becoming a bishop, crossed the Atlantic from America to England to join. He left a fine pastorate to join Booth. At first Booth was reluctant to accept his help. Booth said to Brengle, 'You've been your own boss too long.' And in order to instill humility in Brengle, he set him to work cleaning others' boots. Discouraged, Brengle said to himself, 'Have I followed my own fancy across the Atlantic in order to clean boots?' And then, as in a vision, he saw Jesus bending over the feet of rough, unlettered fishermen. 'Lord,' he whispered, 'you washed their feet; I will clean their shoes.'
 - b. 'One of the ways human pride manifests itself in a stratified society is in refusing to take the lower role. But now that Jesus, their Lord & Teacher, has washed his disciples' feet'an unthinkable act!there is every reason why they also should wash one another's feet, & no conceivable reason for refusing to do so.' (D. A. Carson, Op Cit, p. 363)
 - c. 'It is unlikely that this is to be taken as a regulation;in the interests of [foot] cleanliness;[T]he point of what Jesus has said is rather that they should have a readiness to perform the lowliest service for one another. Nothing was more menial than the washing of the feet. No act of service should be beneath them.' (Leon Morris, Op Cit, p. 551)
 - d. 'The call to service in this text cannot be separated from the call to participation with Jesus (vv. 1-11). One can follow Jesus' example (v. 15) only if one has already experienced Jesus' loving service for oneself;In the community's embodiment & enactment of Jesus' love, the community reveals Jesus' identity to the world;Jesus does not simply issue a general call for service; he issues a call to give as he gives, to love as he loves.' (Gail O'Day, Op Cit, p. 619)
 - e. 'Showing love 'to the end' means showing the full extent of love, & foot washing is an arresting way to do this;What Jesus does for the disciples is the source & norm for what they do for each other (13:14-15);By washing feet he gives extraordinary love in the sphere of ordinary life, & he directs his followers to do the same. They are called to give themselves completely for others, even to the point of laying down their lives...The idea is not that disciples are to wait for a suitable occasion for martyrdom. Rather, if the claim of love extends up to the point of laying down one's life, then it also encompasses countless forms of less dramatic service.' (Craig Koester, Op Cit, pp. 193-4)