

1/2/22 - John 13:1-17 - "The Greatest Act of Humility"

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[0 : 00] It's a new year. It's the first Sunday of the year. Welcome. And no more knee slapping jokes. We'll just continue with the year. And it's 2022, and we have multiple, many more gatherings to be had. And just looking back and surveying last year and God's faithfulness to use us as his vessels to proclaim the gospel. I can only imagine that we ought to just remain steadfast in following him this year as well, and for the 362 days that lay waiting ahead. But you might ask, why? Why would this text, why would this passage have prophetic implications for our year this year?

Well, the passage that we arrive at in this series in the Gospel of John arrives at one of the most well-known passages in Scripture, Jesus washing the disciples' feet. And the prophetic implications of this act rest solely upon the theological ramifications of the account, along with the ethical ramifications of the account. And my hope today is that God's word would challenge each and every one of us, myself included, as we look at a year of, another year of pointing the world and pointing people to Jesus Christ. This is the central theme within this cultural, culturally significant act. How do we get here, though? Where exactly does this account fit within the Gospel of John series?

Where are we exactly? Well, I want to remind us that we just finished chapter 12 within this long stretch of series. I can't imagine what number of messages we are in the Gospel of John, but it's well over, I believe, 30. And so when we finished our message in November, at the end of November, we wrapped up our time in chapter 12. And chapter 12 wraps up not only our section of the sermon, but it also wrapped up, I would just call it a theme within the Gospel of John. It wrapped up Jesus's public ministry. That now, as we go from chapter 12 to chapter 13 today, we arrive into Jesus's private ministry. And what makes this section so significant that I seem to be putting so much emphasis upon it? I believe it's the speed at which John slows us down as readers, as students of his word. And we cannot miss this because there is emphasis that John, through the inspiration of the

Holy Spirit, desires for us to experience. Think about this. The speed, it was kind of just this highlight reel almost through the first 12 chapters of the Gospel of John. And now all of a sudden, the next several chapters from chapter 13 to chapter 17 all occur within one day.

Think about that for just a moment. Why in the world would John, through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, expound upon events that occurred within just one day? There was so much momentum within the previous years within the Gospel of John. Now he's slowing us down. So we will also be slowing down with John as we draw out what he is communicating to us, what God's word is communicating to us today.

[4 : 17] And today we're going to be entering into the upper room in Jesus's final day. If we take ourselves into the passage that we just read, Jesus's cross is tomorrow. But we're not going to get to the cross until later in the series. So verse 1, I believe, serves as an indicator before we begin, because verse 1 is sort of an anchor, a contextual anchor, I'll call it, for lack of a better term. Verse 1 anchors us in the meaning as a heading does within the following context. It indicates, look with me in verse 1 before we dive into prayer for the message today. It says, 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. This verse 1 is a header for the entire context of the section. It's a time that occurred before the feast of the Passover.

It's a time where Jesus knew what was the impending doom, the, let's just not censor it, the horror that awaits him the next day. It's a time that was rooted in God's love for the world. And it's to the end.

It's a similar word that's used for it is finished. That this is something that is connecting to what is going to be accomplished upon the cross when we see to the end. This is a special moment in time of completion.

So I want to pray as we take a seat in the upper room with the disciples and learn from God's word. I want us to learn two views, two views of the cross that Jesus teaches us through a simple, humble task of foot washing. Let's pray and we'll dive into this passage. Father, your word is truth.

Your word has ultimate authority over our feelings, over what we may perceive as being right in your eyes.

[6 : 48] Father, align us at this time with the teaching of your word. Help us to look at this message today and see what John, through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, is trying to communicate to us.

Help us, Lord, by the power of your Holy Spirit to not just mentally affirm the truths of your word, but take them, place them within our hearts to change us, God. We pray for you to change all of us.

I beg you. We praise in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen? So the sermon title today is The Greatest Act of Humility. And I think I got the right date and year on there.

Yep. And this is the greatest act of humility. I'm going to be looking at two essences of cleansing.

That this passage, naturally through its structure, through John's intended aim, and through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit that is being communicated, two essences of cleansing.

[8 : 08] The first section we're going to see is the essence of a cleansed heart. Verse 2 picks up.

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 hand, 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 a towel that was wrapped around him.

Boy, look at the detail. Five verses of explaining what Jesus is doing. With the momentum of the gospel previously, you probably could have said, Jesus got up and started washing the disciples' feet.

Verse 3, on we go. But John has found it helpful to us to explain in great detail something significant in this.

[9 : 20] If we notice the speed at which John is slowing us down today, we would realize that the image that he is attempting to communicate to us is significant, symbolic within what's occurring at this table.

Foot washing. Foot washing. Some churches use it as an ordinance and things like that. We're not going to get into that. If you want to discuss that and what we believe about that, we can hop into our Discover SVC class.

That will be my second promotion of the class. But foot washing, it's something uncommon in our day-to-day. I don't believe that anybody washed their feet on their way in. If you did, congratulations.

Congratulations. It's not as common today. But foot washing back in that day was so necessary. They had sandals. It was dusty. It was rocky.

It was just a very dirty time and period and location. And so it was common in their culture back then to reserve this task of being a foot washer to the lowliest of servants.

[10 : 27] And now I'm not going to go into all the details and the depths of this sign. But what we need to understand is that even if you were a Jewish servant, it was such a low task that Jewish servants couldn't even perform it.

God's people. It had to be reserved to the lowest of the low Gentiles like you and me who are outside of the promises of God that were inherited by Father Abraham and all those things.

But we see that this task, it was the lowest of the low and it was reserved for Gentile slaves. And now I want us to picture the scene.

All the disciples reclining. The cross is a day away. All the disciples sitting around a table. Luke actually accounts that there was a little bit of a debacle going on with who was going to be at Jesus' left and right around this time.

And at this point, they're all chilling. Lounging back. The tables are low. They're probably leaning on their side on a thin mat.

[11 : 44] Feet are sticking out of the other side of the table. Can you see it? Jesus, at a certain point, gets up.

He rises. Took off his outer clothing and wrapped a towel around his waist. Jesus literally adopted the outfit of those who are despised and rejected, looked down, outcasted from society, that have no say in any governmental legislation, that have no...

They could say that... They could say the most profound truth and nobody would believe them. They have no credit to them. And Jesus literally puts on the outfit that was despised.

This scene is truly remarkable. The son of God, stooping down to his creation at this time, onto his knees, taking water in which he created, and gets down and does a task that is a despised act of serving.

As wondrous and wondrous and wondrous as that can be, and as such an act would be, coming from a man of such high estate, the eternal son of God, God himself, John doesn't simply stop there.

[13 : 40] Nor should we, lest we find ourselves in danger of adopting some sort of moralism, of do as Jesus did and everything.

We'll get into that in a moment, but what we're looking at is the essence of a cleansed heart. And that's the point. Jesus will be getting into a section which makes us know and affirm very clearly that foot washing is more than Christ's example of selflessness, of selfless sacrifice.

It's a story of Jesus' redemption. It's a time where we'll get into even Philipians, what it says in that, but the narrative seems like it's interrupted, doesn't it?

It's this glorious arising of Jesus taking water he created, washing the disciples' feet, and then he gets to Peter.

And then we're interrupted with an interaction between Jesus and Peter, and the heart of this act begins to take center stage. If there's any confusion before, he's bringing about understanding of why he is doing this, and most importantly, how we should adequately respond to what he is doing.

[15 : 06] Let's summarize this section with verse 6 through 11. If we stand back a little bit and look at the structure of it, we see Peter objecting, kind of perplexed, three different times.

And then three different times, Jesus responds to him. So look at the words of Peter. Three times he points simply to the superficial act of foot washing.

And as a devoted disciple, his last response, Peter says, if this act of humility means that I have a share with you, then give me the whole spa package.

Here's my feet. Here's my hands. Here's my head. Just, I am devoted to you. I want to have a share with you. And then Jesus kind of is trying to help Peter and us today symbolically understand the sense of what he is intending to reveal at this time.

This is an act alone that he performs symbolically within our hearts to cleanse us from sin.

[16 : 22] We see that in verse 10. 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.

There's a contrasting sense going on with those who belong to God and those who are betraying God with Judas. And it's all revolving around things that lay beneath the surface, beneath our skin, beneath what may appear as, oh, Jesus is washing my feet.

I belong to him. But Jesus is hitting on something a little bit deeper. Foot washing is more than an image of Christ's submission to selfless service.

It's a symbol of Christ's submission to death. That as he removes his outer garments, he is removing his flesh in which his deity can be found.

It's the message of humility that finds its ultimate expression upon the blood-stained cross. And Jesus embodies the picture that Paul paints in Philippians 2, verse 5, where Paul encourages us as readers, Have this mind among yourselves.

[17 : 41] Have this in our thick skulls, essentially, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men.

And when we get into the emptying of what this means, we can get so caught up in what this means as far as, is Jesus emptying himself of something?

But rather, it is Jesus is emptying, pouring himself into humanity. That it's not what he's emptying out of himself, it's what he's pouring himself into.

And it's not simply about the water and the basin, it's about the blood and the cross. The posture in which Jesus arises from this table is the very same posture in which Jesus arises from the earthbound wooden cross.

We can't detach the message of John's gospel throughout and substitute it with this little pick-me-up lesson for you this year in 2022.

[18 : 52] It's going to be the year of humility, and just stop here as if this is where the message stops. That would be moralism.

But yes, this text is saturated in humility. It's saturated in emulation of something, imitation of something. But unless we truly grasp the first essence of a cleansed heart, we're going to fall into a trap of simply moralism.

And so it's saturated in humility. If you see humility in this text, you're on the right track. However, we cannot miss the forest for the trees. Church, don't miss the symbolic emphasis of this act on account of its ethical emphasis.

God's word intends to accomplish something that Peter could not understand, that Peter could not fathom, that, oh, Jesus is, we call it a Jesus juke. Like, Jesus has taken this conversation deep.

He knows the condition of Judas' heart. He knows the condition of everyone in that room's heart. And they think they're simply getting a little spa treatment.

[20 : 13] You see, unless the Lamb of God cleanses a person's sin, you have no share with God. This passage thus far has actually extremely bad news.

Extremely bad news. Because it is tragically possible, church, that those who may think that they've encountered Jesus' cleansing, that their proximity with Jesus attributes anything to their salvation, that because they've encountered Jesus was at the table and washed their feet, that it is tragically true.

But the cleansing that this is supposed to be pointing to is something so much deeper. This is something that is prophetically fulfilled at this time, something that stems back to Jesus' interaction with Nicodemus back in John 3, of being born again.

Nicodemus stuck in the flesh and the reality that meets the eye. And that all stems back to what's been prophesied in Ezekiel 36.

It says, Try to say that word five times fast.

[21 : 43] That our uncleanness has S's. That is a plural problem in our lives. Uncleanness's.

And from all your idols I will cleanse you. And I will give you a new heart. And a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh.

And I will put my spirit within you and cause you to walk in my statutes. And be careful to obey my rules. The accomplishment that Jesus has to offer through the account in John in our experience today is a message deeper than ethical nature of his actions.

It is so much deeper than that. It has everything to do. And it is rooted in the spiritual nature of his actions, and specifically that which was accomplished upon the cross.

And where we arrive at in this is we are naturally defining what true humility looks like and what false humility looks like.

[22 : 56] True humility is rooted in the work of the cross. And false humility is rooted in the work of our hands. And you see, maybe this is you, that you've encountered Jesus, that you've, I don't know, maybe you have the most perfect attendance record in a church.

You've never missed any members meetings. Right? And you got all these things that say that you have been physically, by visual affirmation, you are a Christian because you are visually appearing so to be washed by Jesus.

But it seems as if there's a little upset within your soul that you know that something has not taken place deep within the depth of your skin, within your heart.

Well, faith is what it's all about. Faith and resting in what Jesus has accomplished.

And for you, if that's you today, that have that disconnect of encountering Jesus, but you know that your heart has been just drifting from him, it takes faith and surrender today.

[24 : 23] And he will wash your heart clean and you will never be the same. But surrender to him today. Do you understand that Jesus' actions should literally break down every barrier of pride in our lives and build our lives upon the faith of the one who, verse one, contextually anchors us, the one who loved his own who were in the world loving you to the end.

Having answered the what, the essence of what this is getting at, I think it's only appropriate that we look then of what John is communicating in how we ought to respond to such humility.

So we're going to look at the essence of cleansed understanding. And so we're going to continue in verse 12. Reading this, the strangest things pop into my head once in a while.

And one of them was just the infomercial, you know, salesman at one o'clock in the morning. But wait, there's more. And honestly, like this is, you don't want to, you don't want to stop at the act of humility, but you want to, you got to keep continuing within the pericope of this passage and the section, the unit to really encapsulate a beginning and an end.

And so there's more. We can't simply detach the work of the cross from the effects that it produces within our Christian ethics.

[26 : 02] Because the work of the cross naturally will change us. The washing of Christ upon our hearts changes us. And so verse 12, we see Jesus finished washing their feet.

He resumed his place. He put his regular clothing back. And he asks a question. Look at this question that he asks. Do you understand what I have done to you?

This is important. This, he doesn't say, do you understand what I did for you at all?

Because if he said, do you understand what I did for you would insinuate that it would be possible for those gathered with Jesus to accomplish the cleansing that Jesus is symbolically fulfilling.

Do you understand what I have done to you? And then all these superficial acts. You call me teacher.

[27 : 15] You call me Lord. And you're right, he says. But if I truly am and I have done this act of humility, imitate me as an example to one another.

we might say, you want us to wash Judas' feet? The one who's going to turn you in tomorrow?

The one who had a problem with Mary pouring out her abundance of perfume upon you? You want us to wash one another's feet in a symbolic sense.

And we're going to get into the statement here because what we see is the thrust of Jesus' powerful words of imitation causes the church to evaluate our faith that we claim that we have to him.

If you sang any of the songs today and you're singing from the depths within your soul and that you know that you belong to God, the thrust of these powerful words of imitation, the church should evaluate our faith that we claim we have in him according to the quality of our devotion produced as a direct response of what he's done within our hearts.

[28 : 38] And the hallmark of the Christian life ought to be rooted in humility. And what separates this though from moralism is that our expression of humility humility is not a shadow of ethical fulfillment for ethical namesake.

Our humility that we emulate, that we imitate is a shadow of the cross. It's a shadow that we do not for our namesake, not for ethics sake, but for Christ's sake alone.

This is the essence of a cleansed understanding of what Jesus is doing and how it affects us in our lives. And the mark of the church devoted to Jesus should have essentially, for lack of a better illustration, bruised knees.

The church, when we look at our knees, I don't know, maybe you do have bruised knees and you've been doing well, but maybe our knees aren't quite, they used to call James camel knees because his knees would have calluses on them because he was so devoted to prayer.

The church should be devoted so much that we have bruised knees. And this goes for both sides. Maybe you're struggling in your devotion to God. Your knees should be quite bruised in prayer of pouring your heart out to God to help you, to change you as you continually repent.

[30 : 14] But also, if you're doing well, and you're excelling, you're the elite Christian that everyone wants to be like. You know all the answers, you know all the words. Well, your knees should be bruised as well, as you're excelling in devotion, as you're on your knees serving in Christ's name.

Jesus asked one question in the passage. This entire unit so far, Jesus asked one question. Do you understand what I have done to you?

Let me re-aim and recast that question the same to us and myself included today. Do you understand what Jesus has done to you?

This is where John's details, John details Jesus' remarks to his disciples who have been cleansed. And in so, I will be similarly admonishing us today as those who claim that they have allegiance with God.

It's a simple challenge. Does your cleansed heart reveal a cleansed life? I don't intentionally come up here thinking about how many toes I can step on.

[31 : 33] I truly don't. I come to God's word and say, God, I want you to speak to this church and a text like this will speak to us and trust me, step on my toes and step on all of our toes.

Does our cleansed heart reveal a cleansed life? Is our attitude cleansed? Are our aims in life cleansed?

Are our aspirations in life cleansed? And one thing that God's word makes clear is that the church will have folks with very nice, shiny, clean feet, yet will be filled with filthy hearts.

And that's a hard reality that we have to grapple with, and that is between you and the Lord. Because it also has a way of you can see the other problem in the church that you got masterful foot washers, people that are just the elite, they know the words, they know the verses, everything, and they're masterful foot washers in the service of humility but void of service to Christ, that they are building themselves up, they're not building Christ's name up, and they're in it for themselves.

This passage makes it clear that humility has no power to save, but it does have the power to proclaim. The message of Jesus laying down his life at the cross in order to cleanse our hearts, it's a message of devotion.

[33 : 22] It doesn't matter who you are, we live in this society of this top down sort of organizational chart, you know, you got the CEOs and you got the bottom feeders, the guys out actually doing work, and I understand it's, you know, we all want to be moving up, it's built within our DNA and the culture, and you want promotions and yada, yada, yada.

However, what if the church was actually called to be the bottom feeders? And this is where God will powerfully, ironically, reveal his power through a bunch of bottom feeders.

Think about that. It doesn't matter who you are or what you've accomplished, you deserve nothing from the world, but the world is waiting for everything that you have to offer, waiting for that.

This is the test of a cleansed heart. Jesus, in verse 16, drives the point home with an aphorism, just a concise statement that if you think you are exempt to love, regardless if the recipients deserve it or not, you are fooling yourself.

Basically saying if the disciples are reluctant to doing what he's doing, is a servant greater than his master? Just a simple aphorism of just saying that you are fooling yourself if you think that you are exempt.

[34 : 46] Sproul says intellectual perception is not enough, but having come to faith, our actions must back a committed life. This is evidence of our true faith in God.

And we can't stop there. Verse 17, most of all, says that we will be revealing joy. If you know these things, in verse 17, the act and attitude that points to the cross, blessed are you if you do them.

Not if you think about doing them. Not if you wish you would get better in your 2022 resolutions to start doing them. Blessed are you if you do them.

There's no excuses for that. And think about the implications. I kind of started doing reverse engineering in this and hopefully it makes sense to you today.

Is that if the essence of a cleansed heart will produce and propel obedience, is what this is saying? And that obedience will propel us, that joy will actually be marked and designate us, that we have something that the world is truly longing for?

[36 : 04] What does our complaining in life say about the source of joy? What does that say going backwards to our obedience? What does that then say to a cleansed heart?

Like I said, I did not come here prepare to step on toes like this, but this is God's word. What do our complaining spirits, our negative spirits say about our obedience?

What does it say about our cleansed hearts? This goes deep, church. Are we part of the world or are we distinguished? with the hope that the world longs for, with the joy that the world longs for, are we just kind of jumping into their constructs and how they think that we should think and being a certain level of success?

No. I, Brent, am called to be a bottom feeder and I'm going to use my time wisely at the bottom of this feeder and I'm going to point people to Jesus Christ.

It's significant. Incidentally, that he doesn't say, do just what I have done for you. So if you're in this passage and you're saying, okay, so I'm supposed to die on a cross is what you're saying because it goes a little deeper, it's everything like that.

[37 : 31] No. He corrects us and keeps us on track. He says, do just as I have done for you. And in that as is packed with all that symbolism, all of that nature of humble service.

He's not telling you to die on a cross for somebody. He's telling you to do as I have done for you. Do our lives proclaim a cleansed heart?

If so, it must. It cannot any other way than equal a life of repentance, daily repentance, constantly cleansing our minds and our motives, everything in our lives.

That the essence of a cleansed heart will bring about a cleansed understanding. And I just want to close. I want to land the plane today just simply and quickly with this.

And I want you to think about these things and write them in your notebook and allow this to be something that we grow in this year. If the humble act of Jesus Christ, cleansing the disciples' feet, point to the cross, and our humble attitude of imitation points similarly to the cross, this means the essence of our cleansed heart, our cleansed understanding, are propelled not in anything that we accomplish here at the bottom feeder.

[39 : 14] It's everything that Jesus Christ accomplished for us. And there is nothing that we can do today than to ask ourselves, are we devoted to the mission of pointing the world to the cross?

It's a very simple message, but this, the depths of the implications within our lives, sit on this, let this week pass by, and remember this message.

And I'm telling you, this is going to challenge you like nothing else. Are we devoted to the mission of pointing the world to the cross?

cross, not the mission of humility or social activism, that's replacing what was intended to be there. It's the mission of the cross.

So this year, as we begin, as we're all beginning, we got our Bible plans going, and we got our New Year's resolutions, we're casting vision surrounding what it will look like in this church to increase our missional mindset.

[40 : 28] A mission of service, a mission of love, and a mission of generosity. But before we can run to the mission field, we must run to the altar and evaluate our hearts, and myself included.

So just three things. May our year this year be marked in service, regardless of prerequisites, regardless of our evaluation of somebody's need.

Well, what got you in this bind? Are you budgeting right? Or, you know, why don't you go out and look for a job? Everywhere is hiring. Literally, everywhere is hiring. And, you know, all these reasons why we might go through these prerequisites.

Do they, should I really help them? Well, Jesus doesn't make any exceptions, and neither should we. May our year, secondly, be marked in love towards the unloved or even the hostile.

May our year, thirdly, be marked in generosity, reflecting Jesus Christ, and that we steward every aspect of our resources for the furthering of this kingdom.

[41 : 44] this is a lesson of Jesus Christ's humility and what we need to grasp in our year this year.

I invite you all to have this upon our minds as we go through this year. And as we look back upon, sit here next year in 2023, I can only imagine of seeing God's faithfulness again and again and again and only increasing.

Thank you. You