

## Teaching Points

*(This lesson is perfect timing in relation to Christmas. Try to keep in mind all the connections between Christ's condescension in these verses and the Christmas story.)*

Tonight we're going to focus on the episode in 13:4-20. Last time, we examined the series of statements John made about Christ's self awareness. He was fully aware of His relationship to the Father. He knew where He came from and where He was going. He knew what His enemies were going to do next. And He knew that the Father had given all things into His hands. Right after these profound statements about Christ's omniscience, John tells us about an amazing act of condescension on Christ's part. The one who possessed all knowledge, power, and authority stooped to wash His disciples' feet.

This is a custom that we aren't familiar with in our culture. We drive in cars from town to town, wear shoes when we walk, and sit at tables with chairs. Contrast this with walking from town to town while wearing sandals and reclining at a low table for dinner. Nobody wants to lean back and eat dinner around a bunch of dirty feet! As you can imagine, the task of washing guests' feet was usually done by a lowly servant. But here we see Jesus doing something profound. He, the Master and Teacher, takes it on Himself to perform this inglorious task.

This was shocking to the disciples. As was often the case, Peter was the one who spoke up. **"Lord, are You washing my feet?"** (v. 6). Peter is surprised by the reversal of roles here. He felt like he was the one who should have been washing Jesus' feet. This is somewhat similar to Jesus going to John to be baptized. John had a similar reaction, **"I need to be baptized by You, and are You coming to me?"** (Matthew 3:13). All throughout Christ's earthly ministry we see incredible humility on display.

**Discussion Question:** What thoughts and/or emotions do you think this stirred up in the disciples' hearts?

**Thoughts:** *This had to hit them pretty hard for several reasons. We know that the disciples bickered with each other several times about who would be the greatest among them. Even here at the last supper, none of them had thought to volunteer to wash each other's feet. Jesus is doing something that exposes their pride and shallowness. He IS the greatest and yet He's not unwilling to take on Himself the lowest task. This had to be convicting and humbling. It had to be a scene they remembered later in their ministries when God called them to do things that required patience and humility. They had the PERFECT example to recall to mind. (see verses 12-17)*

This was not only an example to them, but it also served as an illustration. By washing their feet, Jesus was illustrating His cleansing work in their lives. When Peter objects, Jesus responds, **"If I do not wash you, you have no part with Me."** (v.8). He was

surely referring to more than just the physical washing of Peter's feet in this moment. Two things come to mind that Christ is teaching here:

**1. His disciples need to be washed and cleansed from sin.** The physical act of washing their feet was a small picture of the spiritual work Jesus does in us. He washes away the filth and stain of sin - just like the water washed away the dirt and grime from their feet. The work of washing away our sins required great humility and condescension on Christ's part - much like girding a towel and washing feet. The price of our salvation required Jesus to endure humiliation, mocking, scourging, and crucifixion. These are all things that are beneath His majesty and glory as the King of creation. And yet, He humbled Himself and faithfully did His Father's will. (see Philippians 2:5-11)

**2. Christ washing their feet also teaches a lesson about the ongoing nature of repentance.** Jesus tells Peter in verse 10, ***"He who is bathed needs only to wash his feet, but is completely clean..."*** The disciples can have their feet washed before this meal - yet they're going to have to wash their feet again when they travel to another place and eat another meal. In other words, having their feet washed one time isn't enough to cover them for the rest of their traveling and eating. The same is true for repentance. It isn't merely a one time act.

Let's take a moment and appreciate the distinction Jesus makes between bathing and washing feet. According to Jesus, bathing is a more significant cleansing that isn't repeated like foot washing. The point of the contrast has to do with our salvation.

**Discussion Question:** Whole body bathing from head to foot is like our **justification**. Daily foot washing is like our **sanctification**. How so?

**Thoughts:** *When God saves us He washes us with His grace and forgiveness. This is a large part of what JUSTIFICATION is all about. God washes away our sins and declares us righteous in His sight. This is a total cleansing from head to foot.*

*But, even as washed and cleansed saints, we still commit sin. Because of this we also need ongoing forgiveness. We should be in the habit of repenting as part of our lifestyle - just like foot washing was a regular and recurring habit in first century lifestyles. This is consistent with the work of our SANCTIFICATION.*

*(It's somewhat like getting a shower vs. washing your hands. Many people get one shower per day - and that cleanses their whole body and makes them fresh for the rest of the day. But we wash our hands several times throughout the day because, even though we got a shower, we still pick up dirt and grime as we live our daily life.)*

Lastly, Jesus makes some comments about Judas and uncleanness. As He's washing the disciples' feet and teaching them about cleansing, He openly declares that one of them is not washed like the rest. Even though Christ washed Judas' feet along with the other eleven - He knew that Judas had an uncleanness on the inside. His feet were washed - but Judas' heart was hard. This is a powerful reminder to us that true righteousness is that which begins in the heart and flows out into our lives. Let us never settle for "outside in" righteousness. See the following verses:

Matthew 23:25-26, ***“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you cleanse the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of extortion and self-indulgence. Blind Pharisee, first cleanse the inside of the cup and dish, that the outside of them may be clean also.”***

Luke 11:39, ***“Then the Lord said to him, “Now you Pharisees make the outside of the cup and dish clean, but your inward part is full of greed and wickedness.”***

Psalms 51:1-6, ***“Have mercy upon me, O God, According to Your lovingkindness; According to the multitude of Your tender mercies, Blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, And cleanse me from my sin. For I acknowledge my transgressions, And my sin is always before me. Against You, You only, have I sinned, And done this evil in Your sight— That You may be found just when You speak, And blameless when You judge. Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, And in sin my mother conceived me. Behold, You desire truth in the inward parts, And in the hidden part You will make me to know wisdom.”***

## **Prayer Focus**

Let's fully lean into the blessings and joys of Christmas in relation to this lesson tonight. The Incarnation demonstrates the same condescension and humility as Jesus washing the disciples' feet here in John 13. The King of glory was born in a manger! He did this to wash away our sins and reconcile us to Himself! This furnishes us with an abundance of ideas for prayer and praise!