**Wash One Another’s Feet**

August 14, 2021

John 13:1-17 Key Verse 13:15 “I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you.”

John 13:1-17 is a story of Jesus who washed his disciples’ feet. In this event, Jesus showed how much he loved his disciples “to the end” when he had to leave this world. In today’s passage Jesus showed his “to the end” love, in another translation, “his full extent of love” in two ways. First, by washing his disciples’ feet. Second, by helping them to wash one another’s feet. Being washed by Jesus and washing one another’s feet in Jesus’ love are the most beautiful picture which any Christian community can desire and dream. This kind of community is founded and grows only when we have true humility, servanthood, mutual forgiveness and bearing with one another in Christ. This kind of community is the community that we, St. George UBF church has been praying for and also personally I am praying for. So may God bless each one of us to learn what Jesus wants to teach us in today’s passage. Amen.

**I. Jesus loved them to the end by washing his disciples’ feet (1-11)**

Look at verse 1. “It was just before the Passover Festival. Jesus knew that the hour had come for him to leave this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end.” Jesus knew that the time of his death on the cross had come. Now he has his last supper with his disciples before his painful death; crucifixion. Think about this! If you know that you will be crucified very soon, what would you do? Probably you would be crazy and would look for a way to avoid it. If you know you cannot escape it, you would want to find the best way to reduce the pain of the crucifixion. Even if you would accept the crucifixion voluntarily, would you not be troubled when you think about the pain and suffering of it? But *what did Jesus do* at that time when he knew the time had come?

Verse 1b says, “Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end.” Amazingly, Jesus cared his disciples more than himself at his almost last hours on earth. He showed his love for them *to the end*. Here “he loved them *to the end*” was translated in old version of NIV, “he now showed them *the full extent of his love*.” It seems that Jesus had loved his disciples enough until now in many ways. But Jesus knew his disciples needed his love more. Especially Jesus knew his disciples had learned from him many things but still they didn’t know how to love one another. So Jesus wanted to teach about it. How did he teach? Verses 2-11 tells about it. In verse 2, the author describes when Jesus began to show his love to the end, the devil was also working diligently in one disciple’s heart. It was Judas Iscariot. When the evening meal was in progress, the devil had already prompted Judas, to betray Jesus. Judas was one of the 12 disciples, chosen and loved by Jesus. He had been with Jesus living together with him for 3 years but had never accepted Jesus’ words and love. Now he wanted to betray Jesus. Among all kinds of pain, they say betrayal is the most unbearable pain. So usually when we experience betrayal, we want revenge. But Jesus was different. *He loved him too to the end*. How could he do so?

Verse 3 says, “Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under his power, and that he had come from God and was returning to God.” Jesus knew that it was not the Devil or Judas Iscariot but he himself who was in control because the Father had put all things under his power. With the all-power God the Father had given to him, if he wanted, he could bring legions of angels and destroy his enemies in a twinkling of eyes. But Jesus did not want to use his power in that way. Besides, Jesus knew his destiny; where he came from and where he was now going to. So Jesus was not shaky and he did what he wanted. What he wanted was *to show the full extent of his* *love* *to the end to his disciples*. Showing the full extent of his love to the end for now was to wash his disciples’ feet.

Washing the feet of visiting guests was a *custom* in Jesus’ day because in those days roads were mostly unpaved and dusty and *they all* wore *open sandals without socks*. Usually, the job belonged to *servants or slaves or whoever is the lowest position in a family*. A host or a master would never wash others’ feet because it was regarded as most humble job in their culture. When Jesus’ disciples entered the eating place, they did not have anyone to wash their feet. So they should have washed their feet *by themselves* or they should have washed *one another*. But they didn’t want to. So they *ended up* eating with their smelly feet. They were not comfortable in a room where 24 smelly feet spread bad odor. But none of them wanted to wash their own feet or others although there were water, basin, and towel. Why? None of them wanted to be servants among them all. No one thought that others could be better than him.

The author graphically described how Jesus began to wash their feet. Let’s read verses 4-5. “So he got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist. After that, he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples’ feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around him.” When Jesus began to wash their feet, they all became so quiet. They must have been shocked and they did not know how to respond to Jesus. When Jesus came to Simon Peter, he dared to question Jesus. In verse 6, Peter said to Jesus, “Lord, are you going to wash my feet?” Peter could not bear the idea that Jesus would be humiliated by doing the job of a servant because he loved Jesus. So he refused to be washed by Jesus. Even though Jesus replied, “You do not realize now what I am doing, but later you will understand.” (v.7), he did not calm down. Peter said, “No, you shall never wash my feet.” (v.8a) What did Jesus say to him?

Look at verse 8b. Jesus answered, “Unless I wash you, you have no part with me.” “No part with me” means “no relationship with Jesus.” “He would *not* have *anything* with Jesus.” What a dreadful word!” This one word of Jesus must have been like a bomb to Peter. Here, notice that Jesus’ word “Unless I wash you, you have no part with me” has a *spiritual meaning* in it. Physical washing has symbolic meaning that is washing us of our sins. When we are washed from our sins, we can have right relationship with Jesus and others as well. So, “Unless I wash you, you have no part with me” reveals that the fundamental basis of all men’s right relationship with Jesus is “his forgiveness of their sins.” Spiritually our sins should be washed by Jesus because we ourselves cannot wash away our sins. We can wash away our dirty clothes through laundry or our dirty body or feet through taking a shower. But how can we wash away our dirty heart, mind, and contaminated conscience? Only by Jesus and his words. Furthermore, we should be washed by Jesus whenever sinful desires arise in our hearts. We have many sins. As our feet become dirty constantly, sinful desires arise in our heart constantly if we are not controlled by the words of God. Some people say that every 8 seconds they are suffering from sexual thoughts in extreme cases and others claim that they think about 18 times a day. Whatever is correct, it is true that the Devil attacks more than once a day without taking a vacation through our sin (sinful nature).

*How then can we overcome our sin and stay clean*? *The answer is to be washed by Jesus*. We may think that it is okay to remain in sin as long as we repent once in a while. Yet, during the time when we remain in sin, we cannot have intimate relationship with Jesus and we cannot grow or bear fruit of the Holy Spirit. So we should be washed by Jesus immediately whenever sin enters into our hearts. Only by having part with Jesus can we continue to grow and bear fruit. Jesus said the same truth in John 15:5, “I am the vine and you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.” Jesus who taught Peter, “Unless I wash you, you have no part with me,” tells the same thing to us, “Unless I wash you, you cannot have my holiness; you cannot have my love; you cannot have my peace; you cannot have my humility, joy, and anything from me.”

When Peter heard that he would have no part with Jesus, he was shocked and said, “Then, Lord, not just my feet but my hands and my head as well.” (v.9) Even though he refused Jesus’ washing his feet, he had never imagined he would have no part with Jesus. So he just wanted to make sure that he would have part with Jesus. Jesus answered in verses 10-11. “Those who have had a bath need only to wash their feet; their whole body is clean. And you are clean, though not every one of you. For he knew who was going to betray him, and that was why he said not every one was clean.” Once man’s sin is fully washed by believing and accepting Jesus’ words, he is born again by the power of the Holy Spirit. This is what Jesus meant when he says, “their whole body is clean.” To them, they don’t need to be born again a second time. However, like even after having clean whole body, their feet can get dirty always and need to be washed daily, they always need to be washed of their sin whenever it enters into his heart. Repentance and experiencing Jesus’ forgiveness continually through his washing *restore* our intimate relationship with Jesus always. That is the only way for us to have part with Jesus and grow and bear fruit.

**II. Jesus loved them to the end by helping his disciples to wash one another’s feet (12-17)**

After Jesus washed their feet including the feet of Judas Iscariot, Jesus asked them, “Do you understand what I have done for you?” (v.12b) Then he explained the meaning of washing their feet. Let’s look at verses 13-15. “You call me ‘Teacher’ and ‘Lord’ and rightly so, for that is what I am. Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another’s feet. I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you.” Jesus washed their feet to set an example. It was to help his disciples to wash one another’s feet. Now what does it mean to wash one another’s feet? It means actually more than just washing one another’s feet. It means spiritually to forgive each other and bear with one another. Apostle Paul taught exactly the same lesson in Colossians 3:13. It says, “Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.” So eventually “to wash one another’s feet means to love one another.” As Jesus predicted and promised, later Peter deeply understood what it meant to wash one another’s feet. So he taught in Peter 4:8, “Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins.” To love someone does not mean there is no sin in him. We are not required to love only lovely person but unlovely person too. To tell the truth, in people, there are multitude of sins. This is reality wherever you go. But love covers over them all. If we love someone, his sins are covered. If we wash one another’s feet by forgiving each other, we can become truly one in love. Here, notice that Jeus did not say, “you also should wash *others’* feet but *one another’s* feet.” It means we need to wash others’ feet but we also should be ready to be washed by others; meaning to receive others’ love just like pure little children. In this way our washing should be mutual. In verses 16-17, Jesus continued his teaching, “Very truly I tell you, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them.” Jesus is our master and we are his servants. Jesus is the one who sends us to this world and we are his messengers. So he is greater than us. If our master and sender washed our dirty sins, we are to do the same things. Otherwise, we cannot be called his servants. Jesus promised, “You will be blessed if you do them.”

Personally, this summer camp with the theme of John 13 was what I desired and suggested to Dr. Henry because in my heart I had a desire to be washed by Jesus’s words newly and thoroughly and live a new mature divine life; humble, serving, and loving life just like Jesus showed in his example and we all together may build up our community as a beautiful loving community by accepting Jesus’ love more and loving one another more. When I look back on my life, I have lacked many things but most importantly I have lacked the love of God in my heart even though I have had lots of knowledge of the bible. As a result, I have remained very immature. Now I really want to learn God’s love more deeply. How can I learn? In today’s passage Jesus teaches me the love and how to practice the love. I thank Jesus who teaches me his divine love and how to practice his love. Because of my past immature life, I am really sorry to my wife, to my children, and to my precious coworkers and to brothers and sisters in Christ. I was too self-centered, not changed; remaining in my lazy, compromising, indecisive attitude between Jesus and my old-self. Now I want and pray for *completely surrendered life to Jesus*; no more compromising life. I thank Jesus who gives me a renewed vision to build up my family as a beautiful loving family which is full of God’s love and full of God’s kingdom vision and to *more contribute* in building up God’s beautiful loving community in us. I believe God who began a good work in me and in us all will complete his work in all of us.

In conclusion, in today’s passage, Jesus showed his full extent of love in two ways; by washing the disciples’ feet and by helping them to wash one another’s feet through his example. Through this we learn how to receive his love and love one another in his love. May God help us to experience his love through accepting his foot-washing love daily and to grow in knowing his love by washing one another’s feet.

**Big idea: Receive Jesus’ washing our sins daily and wash one another’s feet in his love!**