

**Christ Community Covenant Church**  
**His Love Changes Everything: The Upper Room, John 13**  
**Pastor Dave Scherrer - April 2, 2017**

As our sign says out front, it doesn't seem that one day of worship is enough for something as grand as the resurrection of Jesus Christ. I think this event that has changed everything in human history should at least have a couple of Sundays devoted to the Passion and Resurrection of Christ. So we are!

Over the next three Sundays we will examine three Passion-week events that changed the world – that changed everything. The first we will get started with today and that is the Upper Room account of the love of Jesus displayed in the washing of the disciples feet. Next week on Palm Sunday we will look at the love of Christ revealed in the Garden of Gethsemane. Finally on Resurrection Sunday, we will have our blow out morning of choir and worship team and our reprise of the Story of God as we magnify and celebrate the life claiming reality of Christ risen from the dead!

Some historical context is important to make this story pop out a bit for a 21<sup>st</sup> century reader. This narrative we are about to study is a study in contrasts. For Jesus, it was the display of His humility and His servanthood. For the disciples, the washing of their feet was in direct contrast to their heart attitudes at that time. We also remember that at this very meal Luke records that they are once again having the conversation of who is the greatest disciple (Luke 22:24 *“the disciples had recently been arguing among themselves as to which of them was the greatest.”*)

In the upper room supper, as Rabbi, Jesus would have been the “host” and the apostles the “guests.” Washing the feet of travelers would have been a job delegated to a gentile slave by the host. Not even a Jewish slave would be expected to wash feet. The host of a meal would certainly not lower himself to perform this vile task himself. Walking in sandals on the filthy roads of Israel in the first century made it imperative that feet be washed before a communal meal, especially since people reclined at a low table and feet were very much in evidence.

Even today in the Middle East Muslim culture, if you want to dishonor someone you would hit them with a shoe or better the sole of the shoe to humiliate and show your loathing for someone. Perhaps you remember that when Saddam Hussein's statue was toppled in Baghdad in April 2003, Iraqis swarmed around it, striking it with their shoes. So with all this in mind, let's read the dramatic account. And speaking of drama, remember, Judas Iscariot is in the room and his feet are washed by Jesus as well.

**John 13:1-19** 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.  
<sup>2</sup> During supper, when the devil had already put it into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray him,  
<sup>3</sup> Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come from God and was going back to God,  
<sup>4</sup> rose from supper. He laid aside his outer garments, and taking a towel, tied it around his waist.  
<sup>5</sup> Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel that was wrapped around him.  
<sup>6</sup> He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, “Lord, do you wash my feet?”  
<sup>7</sup> Jesus answered him, “What I am doing you do not understand now, but afterward you will understand.”  
<sup>8</sup> Peter said to him, “You shall never wash my feet.” Jesus answered him, “If I do not wash you, you have no share with me.”  
<sup>9</sup> Simon Peter said to him, “Lord, not my feet only but also my hands and my head!”  
<sup>10</sup> 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.”  
<sup>11</sup> For he knew who was to betray him; that was why he said, “Not all of you are clean.”  
<sup>12</sup> When he had washed their feet and put on his outer garments and resumed his place, he said to them, “Do you understand what I have done to you?”  
<sup>13</sup> You call me Teacher and Lord, and you are right, for so I am.  
<sup>14</sup> If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet.  
<sup>15</sup> For I have given you an example, that you also should do just as I have done to you.  
<sup>16</sup> Truly, truly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him.  
<sup>17</sup> If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them.  
<sup>18</sup> I am not speaking of all of you; I know

whom I have chosen. But the Scripture will be fulfilled, 'He who ate my bread has lifted his heel against me.'

The question I want us to deal with this morning in response to this story is to ask the question, "**How does God bring about deep, permanent, transformative change in us?**"

**How does God bring about deep, permanent, transformative change in us?**

Because that is what we want isn't it? Not a fresh veneer but a new heart. I want to be made new, because the old self doesn't just get in my way, it is killing me. I want to put to death that old self and live the new life promised in Christ. I want to be a whole new creation. My thesis for these next three weeks is that it is the love of Christ that changes everything. Read again what John wants us to remember of Jesus' love from the very first verse:

**"Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end."**

One commentator suggested that a great way to read this verse is this way – Having loved them – He showed them His love.

**"Having loved them, he showed them his love."**

I think that there is a powerful example in Jesus' actions. A life transforming example! Remember verse three, it doesn't finish the way that you think it should...

**V3 "Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come from God and was going back to God, rose from supper and He. . ."**

**Number 1 . . . took up His royal scepter and draping Himself in a purple robe He said in a loud voice, "Bow before the King of kings and Lord of lords. Worship now your True God."**

**Number 2 . . . Jumped onto Amazon Prime and ordered the finest crown in the catalogue from Tiffany's, saving almost \$25 in service and handling!**

**Number 3 . . . He laid aside his outer garments, and taking a towel, tied it around his waist. And then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet.**

What an example of love. Jesus had to ask them if they understood the magnitude of his actions and we see that in verse 12 . . .

**V12b-17** "Do you understand what I have done to you?" <sup>13</sup>You call me Teacher and Lord, and you are right, for so I am. <sup>14</sup>If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. <sup>15</sup>For I have given you an example, that you also should do just as I have done to you. <sup>16</sup>Truly, truly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. <sup>17</sup>If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them.

Here is what Jesus knew . . . He knew how staggering this action was, he knew that they would never forget what he did that night, on the night that he was betrayed. It was culture breaking, it was non-conforming, it was scandalous! He knew that by breaking every custom of privilege and honor that *even this group* of bragging and prideful disciples would get it. **They would get that love washes.**

**Love Washes**

Love, real love, permanent transformative love, is active and humble and never sits idly by when there is cleansing work to be done. Isn't that what Jesus is all about. Isn't that what is foremost on His mind. He is about to go to the cross to wash us free from the stain of sin, and he showed us that real love is proactive and invested and sacrificial. In our world today there are false loves out there. We have to beware of the false love of tolerance and romance.

### **Beware the counterfeit loves of tolerance and romance**

Tolerance tells us that it is loving to accept any kind of behavior and belief and it is unloving to not accept any kind of behavior and belief. The fact is that real love looks at a person in their uncleanness and scandalous behavior and says I love you enough to get into the trenches with you to help you wash, to help you get healthy, to help you become the person that God always saw you to be. I love you too much to let you stay in the fallen, unwashed condition that you are in. Tolerance is not love. In fact, I think it could be said that the more I tolerate your poor behavior and habits, the less I love you. And neither is romantic love. What people call love today is really some kind of 'hunger'. You hear it in the vows of marriages today where the bride and groom write their own vows. They confess a love that is dependent. "I love you because we are so much the same" or "because of your glowing personality" or "their beautiful smile". Or their sex appeal or their car or their status. I love you because there is a hunger in me that I think you can fulfill. I'm not against romance but romantic love never carries the day. Sacrificial love does and we are commanded to love like that. ***Because love washes.***

But Jesus' upper room example is even more magnificent than that and because Jesus not only washes, but he washes feet!

### **Love Washes Feet!**

Washing feet is hard; they are dirty and smelly and often diseased and foul. Now we might be able to suck up and wash someone's feet if they looked like this.



But what if they looked more like this?



This is a tougher assignment. Or what if they looked like this?



That night Jesus washed the feet of a man who would in just a few hours betray him to the Temple guards. I believe that Jesus perhaps looked into the eyes of Judas and in this act of sacrificial love, even at this hour was showing him love that he did not deserve.

**“If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet.”**

And then he commanded us . . .

**“Love one another as I have loved you.”**

Here in this church. Do you love the people in this room even though they are of a different political party? Even if they come off prideful or disinterested in you? Do you cross someone off your list of friends because they failed to return your call or never reciprocated on an invitation for dinner? Our love one for another is deeper than that. We love with the love of Christ and this love changes everything. When I love others like this Christ's love even changes me!

### **Communion**

This is a table of sacrificial love. There is no tolerance at this table, only the washed can come to this table. But Jesus has seen to it that you can become clean before God. There is no silly romance at this table. It is the table of covenant vows not wishful romantic hopes. This is a table where the food prepared is real food and the drink is real drink, because it is the body and blood of our savior. This is the table of sacrificial love.