

NBC Devotional  
March 17, 2021  
The Love Behind a Towel and Basin

*“After washing their feet, Jesus put on His robe again and sat down and asked, ‘Do you understand what I was doing?’” (John 13:12)*

In our day, we do not understand this story. We do not understand what Jesus did, and I doubt that any of us have ever washed anyone else’s feet. That’s just not an American thing to do. Nor is it anything I’ve seen done in other countries.

How would you have felt if this happened to you? What would you have thought if you were one of the disciples that night? When Jesus said, “Do you understand what I am doing?” – would YOU have *understood* what Jesus was doing? I wouldn’t have!

Look at verses 14 and 15:

- *“Since I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you ought to wash each other’s feet.”*
- Jesus said, *“I have given you an example to follow. Do as I have done to you.”*

*“Since I did it, you ought to!”* He said, *“I have given you an example to follow.”* I’m pretty sure that the Disciples had no idea what was going on.

Starting in verse 4, we see a little bit more of the entire scene. Now we actually hear someone respond to Jesus. One person, Simon Peter, is brave enough to say something, although I don’t think that we will applaud him.

- Peter said to Jesus, *“Lord, are YOU going to wash MY feet?”* (v.6)

I guess it was all right to Peter up to that point, but now Peter was getting very uncomfortable with the thought that Jesus would wash HIS dirty feet!

In verse 7, Jesus once again responds that Peter is not understanding what was going on – someday Peter will, Jesus says, but not yet.

In verse 8, Peter exclaims, No way, Lord! *“YOU will **never ever** wash MY feet!”*

Why was Peter so vehemently protesting this? Why was he resisting Jesus?

Could it have something to do with the fact that Peter should have been washing Jesus’ feet?

Could it have something to do with the disciples arguing about who was going to be the greatest in Jesus’ Kingdom?

Could it have something to do with the fact that normally the least important person in the group would do this task – washing the feet of everyone?

Nobody “great” would ever take off their robe, fill a basin, and kneel in front of each person and wash their dirty feet.

What was Jesus doing? This should’ve been done by the youngest! Jesus was doing something that the lowest person should do! Jesus was breaking all of the rules of social behavior!

A master is always above a servant.

A leader is always above the followers.

A teacher/professor is always above the students.

A parent is always above the children.

The older ones are always above the younger ones.

The veterans are always above the newbies.

The rich are always above the poor.

The native is always above the foreigner.

Do WE understand what Jesus was doing here? Jesus was changing the rules! He was giving – by His example - a NEW rule! From now on, LOVE! (a verb)

He certainly HUMBLed Himself by washing the Disciples’ feet, but I think it’s much more than HUMILITY. I think Jesus was trying to show them HIS rule to LOVE each other – genuinely, sacrificially. How do we know?

- *“It was time for supper, and the devil had already prompted Judas, son of Simon Iscariot, to betray Jesus. Jesus knew that the Father had given him authority over everything and that he had come from God and would return to God. So, he got up from the table, took off his robe, wrapped a towel around his waist, and poured water into a basin. **Then he began to wash the disciples’ feet, drying them with the towel he had around him.**” (John 13:3-5)*

He humbled Himself, but I think He was smiling, looking into the faces of each disciple, happily serving them with *agape* – unconditional, infinite LOVE. It wasn’t an obligation; it was loving.

- *“So now I am giving you a new commandment: **Love each other.** Just as I have loved you, you should love each other. Your love for one another will prove to the world that you are my disciples.” (John 13:34-35)*
- *“This is my commandment: Love each other in the same way I have loved you.” (John 15:12)*

Jesus was willing to serve them. His example was to love them. Love means doing whatever is necessary. Love means paying whatever it costs. The focus is on the relationship. The focus is on “the other.” *“So, He got up from the table, took off His robe, wrapped a towel around His waist, and poured water into a basin...”*

Why do I think that LOVE, not HUMILITY was the main point of this story?

- *“Before the Passover celebration, Jesus knew that his hour had come to leave this world and return to his Father. He had loved his disciples during his ministry on earth, and now he loved them **to the very end.**” (John 13:1)*

Because He loved them “...until the very end” (*telos*).

Let’s look at verse 2. Judas Iscariot is highlighted and is implied in verses 10-11:

- *“It was time for supper, and the devil had already prompted **Judas, son of Simon Iscariot, to betray Jesus.**”*
- *“Jesus replied, “A person who has bathed all over does not need to wash, except for the feet, to be entirely clean. And you disciples are clean, but not all of you.” For Jesus knew who would betray him. That is what he meant when he said, **“Not all of you are clean.”**”*

Jesus knew Judas was betraying Him. Judas probably had the 30 pieces of silver in his pocket while Jesus was washing Judas’ feet!

That is love. Jesus knew that Peter was going to deny Him within just a few hours – and Jesus washed Peter’s feet. Jesus knew that every single foot that He washed was soon to be used to run away from Him when the soldiers came for Jesus to arrest Him. That is love.

But Jesus also knew that this was His last night before the Cross. He also knew *“how beautiful are the feet of those who bring the Good News.”* Do you think that when Jesus was lovingly washing and drying each disciple’s feet, He was looking up into each face, and He might have been thinking 20-30-40 years into the future and seeing each disciple preaching the Gospel around the world? Do you think He might have been thinking of how each of them would serve God and suffer for His name?

Jesus knew that...

Judas was getting ready to betray Him – that very evening!

Peter was going to deny that he knew Jesus three times that very night!

every disciple was going to run away and hide!

But He loved them anyway. That’s the infinite Love of our Savior.

And what are WE supposed to do?

Jesus says it clearly:

*“Since I did it, you ought to!”* He said, *“I have given you an example to follow.”* *“Do this, because I did it for you!”* Love each other.

A master should wash the feet of a servant.

A leader should wash the feet of the followers.

A teacher/professor should wash the feet of the students.

A parent should wash the feet of the children.

The older ones should wash the feet of the younger ones.

The veterans should serve the newbies.

The rich should serve the poor.

The native should serve the foreigner.

We all say, "Well, there's a limit to what I would do!"

*But Jesus says, "There's NO limit to what I would do for you!"*

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