

Armagh Baptist Church – Sunday 7th March 2010

'Jesus washing feet!'

John ch.13:1-17

Introduction

John 1:10-12 is a key verse that we need to keep in our minds tonight.

"He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognise him. He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him, Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God."

This verse tells us that Jesus came into *the world* that He had created; He came to save the world, because He loved the world, but the world didn't recognise Him, and rejected Him instead.

He even came to *his own people* - the people of God - The Jews, but they didn't recognise him either, they rejected him. He gave them their last chance to respond to Him at the end of Ch.12, but they refused to take it! All they had to do was to put their trust in Him (v.36), but they refused to do it.

So now from ch.13 onwards, Jesus turns his attention to those who had accepted him, to those who had received him, to those he had given the right to become the children of God - His own disciples. So in chs.13-17 Jesus is going to concentrate on teaching his disciples privately in the Upper Room.

1. He doesn't teach them about love. Until He shows them love in action (vs.1-5)

It's just before the Passover Feast - that was to be Good Friday night.

So this is probably the night before - Thursday.

We're told that Jesus knew that the time had finally come for him to leave this world he had loved and come to save. It was time for him to go back to His Father. Then we read,

*"Having loved **his own** who were in the world, he now showed them the full extent of his love."*

Compare that statement with John 1:10-12.

"*His own*" in John 1 had been the Jews - the OT people of God. Now '*his own*' has changed - it now refers to his disciples - who are to form the New Israel of God - the New Testament Church.

(e.g. The 12 Apostles would replace the heads of the old 12 tribes of Israel.)

John 3:16 told us that "God so loved *the world* that he gave his only begotten Son", now we read "having loved *his own who were in the world.*"

Do you see how the object of God's Love has narrowed from "*the whole world*" to "*his own disciples in the world*"? It's not that he loves the world any

less, because God so loved the world, but that he loves *his own disciples* with an even greater intensity.

And then John says,

“He now showed *them (his disciples)* the full extent of his love.”

I believe that statement refers first of all to what is about to happen there in that Upper Room as Jesus washes his disciples feet – this would be a powerful demonstration of his love and care.

But that phrase can also mean - “he now loved them *to the end.*”

Surely that must refer to the cross.

“*Greater love has no-one than this - that he lay down his life for his friends.*”
(John 15:13).

On the cross Jesus was dying for his friends - his disciples, but it was more than that - he was dying for all “*his own*” who would put their faith and trust in him, down through the centuries ever since.

And it is only those people who have put their trust in Christ who can really appreciate “*the full extent of his love.*” Yes God loves *the world*, but he loves *his own* enough to lay down his life for them!

Are you just one of *the world*, or are you one of those that Jesus has loved *to the end*?

We are reminded in v.2 that Judas already had it in his heart to betray Jesus, (since the incident with Mary wasting the expensive perfume on Jesus’ feet- Matt.26:14), and yet Jesus still is prepared to show his love to Judas, by washing even his feet.

God loves those who even end up in Hell! They are without excuse because they have spurned and rejected God’s love towards them!

v. 3 reminds us of the position of power and authority that Jesus had because He was the Son of God, and was returning to his Father, and yet that didn’t stop him stooping to wash his disciples feet in the very next verses – vs.4 & 5.

Not only did he demonstrate his love to his betrayer,

He also showed his love to the one who was going to deny him - Peter (v.6).

The love of Jesus towards us *all* is an unconditional love - not something we deserve or have earned - He loves us freely.

But having demonstrated his unconditional love for us, then he teaches us, that is how we are to love one another - John 13:34-35 - our fellow brothers and sisters in Christ.

**2. As well as showing us how to love,
He also shows us how to serve one another (v.12-17)**

When Jesus returns to his seat after washing his disciples' feet, he asks them a question,

"Do you understand what I have done for you? (v.12)

They were to think about it. Then he explains it to them. They referred to him as "Teacher" and "Lord" - and that was fine, because that's what he was and is - our Lord and Teacher. But if He, as their Lord and as their Teacher had been prepared to get down and do the menial task of washing his disciples feet, then they as his disciples should be prepared to do similar things for each other. Jesus had set them a prime example of servant-hood (v.15-17).

But why did they need this lesson? Because in Luke's account of this event in Luke 22:24-30 they were still disputing among themselves over who was the greatest. Jesus was teaching them that leadership in His Kingdom or in His Church was not a matter of pomp and ceremony, of sitting on a throne and everybody bowing down to you, it was to be a matter of servant-hood.

Jesus said, *"I am among you as one who serves"* (Luke 22:27).

Jesus was taking up the picture of the Suffering Servant of Isaiah and applying it to himself as a picture of his Messiah-ship.

He hadn't come to reign on a throne at this stage or to overthrow the Romans, but he had come to serve His people and then to give His life as a ransom for many (See Isaiah 52:13-53:12).

So the very thing the crowd had turned against him for, because he wasn't the kind of military Messiah they were looking for, he now explains to his disciples in private.

Later on in the N.T Paul was to teach all of us that we should have the same attitude as that of Christ Jesus - the attitude that was demonstrated here, and also at the cross. (Philippians 2:5-11).

Peter had got the message too. (1 Peter 5:1-6).

**3. We still haven't got to the heart of this passage,
Until we see our need for spiritual cleansing (v.6-11)**

We skipped over the middle section, but maybe it is the most important of all. (vs.6-11). It's the whole incident with Peter. Peter is affronted at the very idea that Jesus, his Lord and Master, was going to wash his dirty old feet.

At first he asks a question out of amazement and unbelief (v.6).

Jesus basically said to him,

"You don't understand what I'm doing now, but later you will. - trust me!"

But Peter is very emphatic in v.8 –

"No way, there is just no way you are ever going to wash my feet! Never!"

But look what Jesus says in v.8:

"Unless I wash you, you have no part with me."

This is the most important lesson of all here in this passage. Unless you allow Jesus to wash you and cleanse you, you can have nothing to do with him. You may try your hardest to clean yourself up, to do your best, to brush up your act to try to get right with God and into heaven, but until you stop all that, and just let Jesus wash you and cleanse you from your sin, you can have no part with him at all.

But then look what Peter says in v.9:

"Alright Lord if that's how it is then, don't just wash my feet, but wash my hands and my head as well! I really want to be with you!"

Peter loves the Lord, and whatever it takes, whatever he has to do, he wants it, as long as he can be with Jesus. Well look at what Jesus says in v.10,

"A person who has had a bath needs only to wash his feet; his whole body is clean. And you are clean, though not every one of you."

Now Jesus is talking to his twelve disciples, and he says, *"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."*

They were all clean except Judas. And they were all clean because they had had a bath. Now he is obviously not talking about a physical bath, and he is certainly not talking about physical washing. He is talking about a spiritual bath, and spiritual cleansing. So what is this bath he's talking about?

All 12 of the disciples had been baptised either by John or Jesus, because they in turn baptised others. But if Judas had been baptised, but wasn't clean, then this bath Jesus is talking about can't be baptism. So what is it?

Well let's allow John to explain himself - See 1 John 1:7-9.

What is it that can cleanse or purify us from all sin? (v.7)

It's not the water of baptism. ***It's the blood of Christ.*** i.e trusting in his blood that was shed for us on the cross, is the only thing that can cleanse us from our sin. That's the bath, a once only cleansing from our sin when we trust in Christ as Saviour. That's a one-off. But what is this regular washing of our feet we need? (John 13:10). Well even as Christians we are not perfect, and we still sin from time to time (v.8,9).

But if we confess our sins to the Lord whenever this happens, then He will go on cleansing us from our sin and from all unrighteousness (See 1 John 2:1,2).

**The question is have you had the bath?
Until you do, washing your feet is just not good enough!**

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