



19 Minutes With the Messiah

A Lesson About Foot Washing

(John 13:1-17)

Jesus' Body as the Temple
The Living Water
New Cloth
New Wine in Old Wineskins
The Salt of the Earth
The Light of the World
The House Built on the Rock
The Two Debtors
The Sower
The Weeds
The Growing Seed
The Mustard Seed
The Yeast
The Hidden Treasure
The Fine Pearl
The Net
I AM the Bread of Life
Becoming Childlike
The Unmerciful Servant
I AM the Light of the World
I AM the Gate
I AM the Good Shepherd
The Good Samaritan
The Friend at Midnight
The Rich Fool
The Wise Servant
The Barren Fig Tree
The Great Banquet
The Lost Sheep
The Lost Coin
The Lost Son
The Shrewd Manager
The Rich Man and Lazarus
The Unworthy Servants
I AM the Resurrection and the Life
The Persistent Widow
The Pharisee and
the Tax Collector
The Workers in the Vineyard
The Ten Minas
The Two Sons
The Wicked Tenants
The Wedding Feast
The Fig Tree
The Householder
The Ten Virgins
The Talents
The Sheep and the Goats
► A Lesson About Foot Washing
I AM the Way
I AM the True Vine
The Woman in Labor
I AM the Alpha and the Omega

¹It was just before the Passover Feast. Jesus knew that the time had come for him to leave this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he now showed them the full extent of his love.

²The evening meal was being served, and the devil had already prompted Judas Iscariot, son of Simon, to betray Jesus. ³Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under his power, and that he had come from God and was returning to God; ⁴so he got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist. ⁵After that, he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples' feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around him.

⁶He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, "Lord, are you going to wash my feet?" ⁷Jesus replied, "You do not realize now what I am doing, but later you will understand." ⁸"No," said Peter, "you shall never wash my feet." Jesus answered, "Unless I wash you, you have no part with me." ⁹"Then, Lord," Simon Peter replied, "not just my feet but my hands and my head as well!" ¹⁰Jesus answered, "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." ¹¹For he knew who was going to betray him, and that was why he said not every one was clean.

¹²When he had finished washing their feet, he put on his clothes and returned to his place. "Do you understand what I have done for you?" he asked them. ¹³"You call me 'Teacher' and 'Lord,' and rightly so, for that is what I am. ¹⁴Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. ¹⁵I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. ¹⁶I tell you the truth, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. ¹⁷Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them."

1. Usually a slave washed the feet of guests as they entered the home of the host. Apparently, in the borrowed upper room on the night before Jesus' death, the Lord and his disciples did not enjoy such service. Who, then, would have been the most likely candidate to perform this work for the others? Why? What attitudes kept him (and often keep us) from doing so?
2. What insight into Jesus' actions at this Passover meal is found in the following passages? Of what were his actions a foreshadowing?

"Here is my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen one in whom I delight; I will put my Spirit on him and he will bring justice to the nations" (Isaiah 42:1).

"Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death—even death on a cross!" (Philippians 2:5-8).

3. With a shift in wording in his response to Peter (verse 8), Jesus changed the subject from things physical to things spiritual. Explain.

4. Complete the following statement. It had to have been particularly challenging to Jesus' love to wash the feet of Judas because
 - a.

 - b.

5. What do the titles "Teacher" and, in particular, "Lord" imply? What lesson about foot washing does Jesus teach his followers by mentioning these titles?

6. Explain the following passage. How does it relate to our "foot washing"?

"Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ" (Galatians 6:2).

For Further Study

7. Recall the details of the first Passover. How did the Passover meal prefigure Christ?

8. Discuss the blessings as well as the challenges of humble Christian service.

9. React to each of the following:
 - In some churches the clergy wash the feet of parishioners during Maundy Thursday worship services as the fulfillment of Jesus' words.
 - "After serving in this church for more than 50 years, I'm done; I've put in my time."
 - "Jesus' cross not only serves as an example to me but actually empowers me."

Prayer

Jesus, our Teacher, Lord, and Savior, your humble service took you to the cross for our salvation. Inspire and empower us by that good news to follow your example. Amen.

Helps:

- (1) Any of the disciples might have stepped forward to wash the feet of the others. Perhaps one of the younger or less prominent among the Twelve would have been a likely candidate. Sinful pride and selfishness can keep all followers of Christ from serving.
- (2) Jesus is the one whom God had chosen to be the world's Servant and Savior. The Son of God took on the form of a slave. The humble service of foot washing foreshadowed Jesus' ultimate act of service, the cross.
- (3) Jesus omitted the word "feet" and changed "your" to "you." He was speaking of his washing us clean from our sins. Without this humble, saving service on our behalf, we can have no relationship with him.
- (4) Verses 2, 3, 10, and 11 indicate that Jesus was aware of Judas Iscariot's decision to betray his Lord to death. Jesus was also fully aware of his own dignity and of the full glory that he was about to receive from his Father. In spite of his awareness of these things, Jesus' condescending and endless love moved him to wash Judas' feet.
- (5) Both titles imply authority. Since Jesus, our Teacher and Lord, has served and still serves us in love, we, his followers, ought to have the same attitude and spirit toward one another—a humble attitude and spirit of love and service.
- (6) Saint Paul was writing specifically about the loving act of leading fellow Christians to repentance. Yet his words apply to every situation: humbly helping and serving our fellow Christians by sharing their burdens so that, in a real sense, we join them in carrying those burdens. This is what it means to follow the "law," or pattern, that Christ has left us. We do so out of appreciation for God's grace.
- (7) The leader should be familiar with the details of Exodus chapters 7–12 (the plagues on the Egyptians, Pharaoh's stubborn unbelief, the plague on the firstborn and the Angel of death, the lamb and its saving blood, the Passover meal). The perfect lamb whose blood delivered the people was the focal point of the Passover meal. This lamb prefigured Christ. It was at the Passover table that Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper.
- (8) God is glorified by our humble Christian service. In addition, we are blessed, our fellow Christians are served and helped, and unbelievers are attracted to Christ when they see our good works. Satan and our own selfish and proud sinful nature challenge our service. Furthermore, Jesus reminds us that as his followers, we can expect to be treated no better by the world than he was (John 15:20).
- (9) Jesus' command to wash one another's feet is not fulfilled by a mere external act. This Maundy Thursday ritual may simply represent the entire life of humble service by those whose hearts have been touched and changed by the love of Christ. While gifts and abilities may diminish and change with age, every Christian, regardless of age, has been equipped for lifelong service to the Lord and others. The good news of forgiveness and salvation through the life, death, and resurrection of Christ inspires and empowers us to put away selfishness and sinful pride and to humbly, willingly, and joyfully "wash the feet" of others.