

He Loved Me...

He Loves Me Lots

The Gospel of John

Text

John 13:1-15

Topic

Jesus "loved His own to the end," and He shows it by washing their feet and later praying for them

Title

"Feet, Pray, Love"

"Who are you wearing?"

- On the Red Carpet, a celebrity might say Gucci, Versace, or Armani.
- In Kings County, you might say Workingman's Store, Target, or WalMart.

My Junior and Senior years in high school in Southern California the cool kids wore Levi button fly 501 jeans from Millers Outpost, white pocket t-shirts from Sears, tennis shoes or boots. Everyday.

What about you? What was your 'look' in high school?

Just once I'd like to hear a celebrity answer, "Who are you wearing?" by saying, "Jesus."

In Romans 13:14, the apostle Paul instructs believers to **"put on the Lord Jesus Christ."** The phrase *put on... Christ* means to figuratively clothe oneself with the Lord Jesus Christ. It means to wear Him like a garment.

Jesus made a wardrobe change at the Last Supper. He “rose from supper and laid aside His garments, took a towel and girded Himself. After that, He poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples’ feet, and to wipe *them* with the towel with which He was girded. When He had washed their feet, taken His garments, and sat down again.” The Lord said, “I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you.”

Gird up, Christian, and tie on your towel. I’ll organize my comments around two points: **#1 Do Not Underestimate Your Toweling**, and **#2 Do Not Overthink Your Toweling**.

#1 - Do Not Underestimate Your Toweling (v1-11)

“Give me your sword,” requests Aragorn of a very frightened young boy. It is the eve of the Battle of Helms Deep, and everyone is outfitting themselves as best they can. “This is a good sword,” he concludes.

The next five chapters of the Gospel of John describe a single night - the Thursday of Passion Week. It is the night before cosmic forces will culminate at the Cross. Jesus inspires His disciples by wielding, not a sword, but a **towel**. “This is a good towel,” perfect for the conflict at hand.

Joh 13:1 Now before the Feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that His hour had come that He should depart from this world to the Father, having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end.

Six-thousand or so years earlier, God had spoken of coming to Earth to defeat the devil. He said to the devil, “I will put enmity Between you and the woman, And between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, And you shall bruise His heel” (Genesis 3:15). The “Seed of the woman” was a prophecy of the virgin birth by which God would become man in the incarnation.

The “hour” was at hand in which the God-man would die, rise from the dead, and ascend back to Heaven.

Jesus “loved them to the end” has a double meaning:

- It refers to the “end of His life.” Jesus would complete the mission of sacrificing Himself on the Cross.

- “End” means *to the conclusion*. As believers, we see an end, the conclusion, to this current creation and the creation of new heavens and a new Earth.

Jesus loves **you** “to the end.” He gave Himself for you on the Cross. What He began in you, He will conclude.

He’ll conform you into His image, and one day we will all awake in His likeness. He will restore creation and we will live in it without sin forever.

Joh 13:2 And supper being ended, the devil having already put it into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon’s son, to betray Him,

Comparing all the accounts, we learn Judas was sitting right next to Jesus. Jesus knew it wasn’t only Judas. The devil was there. *Talk about keeping your enemies close.*

From the beginning, Jesus knew he was “a devil” (John 6:70). I don’t think anyone would have thought it a good idea to have Judas as one of the twelve.

I think it is safe to say that a battle of cosmic proportions was underway at the low table. On the surface, it seemed more like a staring match, or a battle of wits. The eleven disciples had no idea what was going on.

Joh 13:3 Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He had come from God and was going to God,

Time was preciously scarce. Only hours and He would be separated from His disciples until after His death and resurrection. Shortly thereafter, Jesus would ascend, and be gone an undisclosed period of time. Whatever Jesus said and did at this supper - well, it must be of critical importance.

Joh 13:4 ...[Jesus] rose from supper and laid aside His garments, took a towel and girded Himself.

Joh 13:5 After that, He poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples’ feet, and to wipe *them* with the towel with which He was girded.

He “rose from supper” because they reclined on pillows around a low table. Jesus removed His outer robe; He’d have on a shorter tunic underneath. He tied a long towel around His waist, apron-like, then with a pitcher of water and a basin, went from disciple to disciple.

In that moment, with hindsight, we see that Jesus weaponized the towel.

The apostle Paul explains what we mean, in that brilliant passage in Philippians that presents Jesus in His incarnation.

Php 2:5 Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus,

Php 2:6 who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God,

Php 2:7 but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, *and* coming in the likeness of men.

Php 2:8 And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to *the point of* death, even the death of the cross.

Php 2:9 Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name,

Php 2:10 that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth,

Php 2:11 and *that* every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ *is* Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Jesus "humbled Himself." He was God, but volunteered to be born of a virgin and add humanity to His deity.

For over thirty-years, He set aside the independent use of His deity and perfectly obeyed God the Father. His penultimate obedience was to give Himself as a sacrifice on the Cross. His humility was rewarded by His being exalted above all Creation.

A couple of weeks ago I quoted Vincent de Paul, who said, "*The most powerful weapon to conquer the devil is humility. For, as he does not know at all how to employ it, neither does he know how to defend himself from it.*"

Gandalf's strategy for defeating Sauron in the *Lord of the Rings* is to see to it that the One ring is destroyed. It was something the Dark Lord would never foresee, not until it was too late.

Zach Poonen writes, "*Sin came through the pride of Lucifer and salvation came through the humility of Jesus.*"

Jesus defeated Satan by humbling Himself. Not just then; His humility began in the Garden of Eden, when He volunteered to come as the Seed of the woman.

Jesus' entire life was a humbling:

- The circumstances of His conception were humiliating.
- For a time, Jesus and family were fugitives, hiding from murderous King Herod.
- They eventually settled in a not-so-desireable Nazareth.

The prophet Isaiah said of Jesus, *"For He shall grow up before Him as a tender plant, And as a root out of dry ground. He has no form or comeliness; And when we see Him, There is no beauty that we should desire Him"* (Isaiah 53:2).

I've always assumed that Jesus had what we call charisma. He didn't - not according to Isaiah.

Back to the tussle at the table. Satan's strategy was coming together. It was a classic deception and betrayal, based on lies, leading to murder.

Jesus rose from the table... And "He humbled Himself." Washing the feet of the disciples was like setting off a spiritual warhead on the devil's forehead. It was an 'H' bomb - a humble bomb.

There was no greater weapon, no more effective strategy, than humility. The only thing that Satan could do was kill Jesus; but that would only make the Lord's humility complete. It would be humility on steroids, humility to the infinite power.

At the Cross, in what looked like a satanic victory, Jesus declared His work finished. He showed His victory by dismissing His own Spirit to death, in a loud voice, no less.

When Jesus stood up and took off His outer garment, it illustrated His divesting Himself of His deity and taking on humanity in the incarnation. Then He took up His outer garment, as He did His deity in the resurrection.

Leon Morris says of the foot washing, *"It is a parable in action, setting out that great principle of [humility] which finds its supreme embodiment in the Cross."*

From Heaven to Earth... From Earth to the Cross... From the Cross to the grave... From the grave to the sky. Humbled; then exalted.

Joh 13:6 Then He came to Simon Peter. And *Peter* said to Him, "Lord, are You washing my feet?"

Scholars are pretty much in agreement about where Jesus, Judas, John, and Peter reclined around the table:

- Judas and John were seated next to Jesus, on His left and right, respectively. Yes, Jesus washed Judas' feet.
- Peter was across from John, which put him in the last spot.

It seems that the Lord came first to Peter. Before we criticize him for his initial refusal, consider this. When John the Baptist desired to give expression to his feeling of unworthiness in comparison to Christ, he could think of no better way to express this than to say that he deemed himself unworthy of kneeling down in front of Jesus in order to unloose his sandalstraps and remove His sandals (with a view to washing the Master's feet).

Joh 13:7 Jesus answered and said to him, "What I am doing you do not understand now, but you will know after this."

After His death, resurrection, ascension, and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon the church... **Then** the meaning not only of this foot washing but of His entire work of humiliation would become clear.

"What I am doing you do not understand now, but you will know after this," is an explanation we are going to hear over and over **in our lives:**

- We are not going to find the deep meaning of all the events of our lives. God's plans are too wonderful, too complex, for Him to breakdown all the details. We can't know the butterfly effect.
- We shouldn't try to make everything meaningful. We trust by faith that all things are working together for the good. The presence of the Lord is all the 'meaning' we require.

*Keep us little and unknown,
prized and loved by God alone¹*

Joh 13:8 Peter said to Him, "You shall never wash my feet!"

¹ Charles Wesley

"Never say never" is good advice when we are dealing with the Lord. "Whatever, wherever, whenever" are better attitudes. "Here am I, Lord"... Send me; or Don't send me."

Joh 13:8 Peter said to Him, "You shall never wash my feet!" Jesus answered him, "If I do not wash you, you have no part with Me."

Joh 13:9 Simon Peter said to Him, "Lord, not my feet only, but also *my* hands and *my* head!"

I do like that Peter was an all-in kind of guy. It's better to try to channel someone's zeal than to try and stir them up.

The Gospels present Peter as a big man. The foot washing basin would not be sufficient for a bath, but in addition to his feet, Peter wanted his hands and his head washed. Any part of him that might have cooties.

Joh 13:10 Jesus said to him, "He who is bathed needs only to wash *his* feet, but is completely clean; and you are clean, but not all of you."

Because of His total humiliation, culminating on the Cross, the Lord can cleanse us. Though our sins be as crimson, He can make us white as snow.

It is likened elsewhere to His giving us a robe of righteousness that outfits us for Heaven.

Salvation is like being bathed, but as a one-time cleansing. After that, as you walk in the world, the Lord spot-cleans you. Theologians call this aspect of salvation your *sanctification*. We read, for example, that Jesus intends to "sanctify and cleanse [the Church] with the washing of water by the word, that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish" (Ephesians 5:26-27).

To be specific, what we believe is called progressive sanctification. We make progress to the end. Jerry Bridges said, "Sanctification is the work of the Holy Spirit in us whereby our inner being is progressively changed, freeing us more and more from sinful traits and developing within us over time the virtues of Christlike character."

You are saved once-for-all, then sanctified day-by-day. One day, you will be raised from the dead or raptured. You will then experience the completion of your salvation

- called glorification. F.F. Bruce writes, "Sanctification is glory begun. Glory is sanctification completed."

Joh 13:10 ... you are clean, but not all of you."

Joh 13:11 For He knew who would betray Him; therefore He said, "You are not all clean."

Eleven of them were saved, and were being sanctified. One of them was not. Things were about to get real.

God enjoys using odd implements as weapons to show His power:

- Shamgar "killed six hundred men of the Philistines with an ox goad" (Judges 3:31).
- Samson killed one thousand men with the jawbone of a donkey (Judges 15:15).
- Gideon's army was equipped with jars, torches, and trumpets (Judges 7:20)

Christians have an odd assortment of weapons. The apostle Paul, in Second Corinthians 6:3-10, writes,

2Co 6:3 We give no offense in anything, that our ministry may not be blamed.

2Co 6:4 But in all *things* we commend ourselves as ministers of God: in much patience, in tribulations, in needs, in distresses,

2Co 6:5 in stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labors, in sleeplessness, in fastings;

2Co 6:6 by purity, by knowledge, by longsuffering, by kindness, by the Holy Spirit, by sincere love,

2Co 6:7 by the word of truth, by the power of God, by the armor of righteousness on the right hand and on the left,

2Co 6:8 by honor and dishonor, by evil report and good report; as deceivers, and yet true;

2Co 6:9 as unknown, and yet well known; as dying, and behold we live; as chastened, and yet not killed;

2Co 6:10 as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things.

If my count is accurate, Paul listed thirty-seven things that are potential weapons in our warfare. All of them come under the heading of Humility.

Do not underestimate the power of your towel.

#2 - Do Not Overthink Your Toweling (v12-15)

If we come away from this thinking we ought to have foot washing ceremonies, we've missed the point entirely. Jesus will reiterate that what matters is humbling yourself, and putting Him on, especially His humility.

Joh 13:12 So when He had washed their feet, taken His garments, and sat down again, He said to them, "Do you know what I have done to you?"

Jesus "sat down." It completed the figure. He would return to Heaven, sit down at the Father's right hand. He would look very different when John saw Him in the first chapter of the Revelation.

If you have a presentation to make, it's best to begin with something important. Jesus was a masterful teacher. In a night filled with instruction, Jesus wanted first to set the standard. The Church Age would continue His humiliation on Earth as His disciples all take up the towel.

We're the Towel Academy... The Fellowship of the Towel...

Joh 13:13 You call Me Teacher and Lord, and you say well, for so I am.

No one is greater than Jesus. To save you, He humbled Himself. You and I are asked to humble ourselves. Knowing how far Jesus stooped, can there be any resistance to putting on humility?

We're not talking about eating humble pie. BTW - Did you know that in the Middle Ages, they ate umble pie? It derived from the French word, *numble*, which means *deer's innards*. Today we call innards, *offal*.

Numble, umble, humble, offal, awful. "Eating humble pie" has come to mean humiliation and subsequently apologizing for a serious mistake.

Jesus wasn't baking a humble pie to give to Judas. His humility was a powerful choice to lay down His life so that all might live.

God became flesh so He could suffer and die for you. If He asks you to put off your flesh, put on humility, and offer yourself a living sacrifice, it's reasonable.

Joh 13:14 If I then, *your* Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet.

If you want to practice foot washing, you are free to do so. But that is off point. Put on humility; walk humbled by what Jesus has done.

Joh 13:15 For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you.

The "example" Jesus was referring to was the foot washing. But we know that Jesus is our example in everything. "Christian" means *Christ-like*. We are to be like our Lord.

There are a lot of deep definitions for "humble." Mere words, however, lack context. I suggest the following. Jesus *always* humbled Himself. We ought to reflect upon everything we are told about Jesus and examine Him for His humility.

How did Jesus humble Himself talking to the Samaritan woman by the well? Or the woman caught in adultery? What kind of humility overturns the tables of moneychangers in God's Temple?

Andrew Murray said, "*We had long known the Lord without realizing that [humility] should be the distinguishing feature of the disciple.*"

He who began a good work in you will complete it. You are probably in some trial or situation that calls for humbling yourself. Don't overthink it.

Humble thyself in the sight of the Lord!