
JOHN: THAT YOU MAY BELIEVE

CHRIST'S INSUFFERABLE EXAMPLE

A message presented by Pastor Marc Minter
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INTRODUCTION

In the final days of Jesus' earthly ministry, He seems to have concentrated His time and attention upon His closest disciples. In John's Gospel, we read about an evening meal during which Jesus took on an awkward task. Jesus – the Son of God, the Holy One of Israel, the Messiah of old – dressed Himself as a lowly servant and did a humiliating chore. In washing the feet of His disciples, He was illustrating His posture in all-of-life and calling His disciples to follow His example. In this message, we shall consider the summons Christ gives to His followers and the implications for Christian living.

MESSAGE MADE SIMPLE

Jesus said, *"I have given you an example, that you also should do just as I have done to you... If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them"* (Jn. 13:15, 17).

In the final days of Jesus' earthly ministry, He seems to have concentrated His time and attention upon His closest disciples. In John's Gospel, we read about an evening meal during which Jesus took on an awkward task. Jesus – the Son of God, the Holy One of Israel, the Messiah of old – dressed Himself as a lowly servant and did a humiliating chore. In washing the feet of His disciples, He was illustrating His posture in all-of-life and calling His disciples to follow His example.

Christians may rejoice to know that Christ alone has performed the role of savior and redeemer. What joy fills the heart of the sinner who is washed clean by the glorious sacrifice of Christ in their place! Indeed, this cleansing is something only Christ can do.

And yet, it is no contradiction for Christ to summon His disciples to do as He did. The Christian can by no means heal the sick, raise the dead, or atone for sin. But the Christian is called to follow Christ's example by analogy. As Christ lived (selfless, humble, compassionate, loving, etc.), so too Christians are to live. There is even the promise of blessing from Christ Himself to all who know and do these things.

JOHN 13:1-20 (ESV)

1 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.

2 During supper, when the devil had already put it into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray him, 3 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, 4 rose from supper. He laid aside his outer garments, and taking a towel, tied it around his waist. 5 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.

6 He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, "Lord, do you wash my feet?" 7 Jesus answered him, "What I am doing you do not understand now, but afterward you will understand."

8 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."

9 Simon Peter said to him, "Lord, not my feet only but also my hands and my head!" 10 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." 11 For he knew who was to betray him; that was why he said, "Not all of you are clean."

12 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?"

13 You call me Teacher and Lord, and you are right, for so I am. 14 If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. 15 For I have given you an example, that you also should do just as I have done to you.

16 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. 17 If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them.

18 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.' 19 I am telling you this now, before it takes place, that when it does take place you may believe that I am he.

20 Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever receives the one I send receives me, and whoever receives me receives the one who sent me."

THE POINT I'M AIMING AT TODAY

Christ commands all Christians to follow His other-worldly example.

MESSAGE OUTLINE

(1) THE INCREDIBLE HUMILITY

(2) THE INSUFFERABLE EXAMPLE

(3) THREE PRACTICAL PRINCIPLES

(4) APPLICATION: FOUR QUESTIONS

MESSAGE

(1) THE INCREDIBLE HUMILITY

- ***The Context of the Foot-Washing***
 - The context of this is **Jesus' impending death**.
 - "Jesus knew that **his hour had come to depart out of this world to the Father**" (v1)
 - **Is this the Passover meal?** The Lord's Supper?
 - "**Now before** the Feast of the Passover..." (v1)
 - "**During supper...**" (v2)
 - Was this **supper before** the **Passover**?
 - Though there is much controversy over the chronology of this meal in John's Gospel, I believe there is a fairly simple explanation.
 - The phrase in v2 is translated "**during supper**" (ESV, NASB), "**supper being ended**" (KJV, NKJV), "**the evening meal was in progress**" (NET), and "**the evening meal was being served**" (NIV 1984)
 - If the supper was **ended** and it was **before** the **Passover** (KJV), then there are certainly some chronological difficulties.

- But, if we understand the “**before**” of v1 to refer to the **foot-washing**, and if we allow for the phrase in v2 to indicate something about the **progress of the supper** (not the end of the supper), then there is no problem with John’s chronology.
 - It would certainly make sense for **feet** to be **washed** either **before** or at the **beginning** of the meal.
- See D.A. Carson for further information on the matter.
 - Carson on chronology: “**Jesus and his disciples did indeed eat a Passover meal on Thursday**, the beginning of 15 Nisan. John’s Gospel, rightly interpreted, does not contradict this chronology in any of the seven verses alleged to do so (13:1, 27; 18:28; 19:14, 31, 36, 42).”¹
 - Carson on the Lord’s Supper: “**Jesus came and lived and died and rose again and was exalted not to bequeath to needy sinners a rite, but himself, and all the blessings that flow from that gift.** [John is not] distracted from this central and fundamental message.”²
- **Foot-Washing illustrates Christ’s humility**
 - Understanding the illustration
 - “**What I am doing you do not understand now, but afterward you will understand**” (v7)
 - Again, the context is Jesus’ impending death.
 - The foot-washing was meant as an illustration that would be better understood after Jesus was crucified.

¹ Carson, D. A. (1991). The Gospel according to John (p. 457). Leicester, England; Grand Rapids, MI: Inter-Varsity Press; W.B. Eerdmans.

² Ibid, 458.

- Jesus says to Peter, “If I do not wash you, you have no **share** [inheritance] **with me**” (v8)
 - This statement further confirms the illustrative purpose of the foot-washing...
 - For Jesus to “wash” them is to **unite them with Himself**, even to share in His inheritance as God’s Son!
 - But it is **not the foot-washing that cleanses**, since Judas was also “washed” but not “clean” (v10-11).

- “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.**’ For [John says] **he knew who was to betray him**; that was why he said, ‘Not all of you are clean.’” (v10-11)
 - Not only does this emphatically say that **the foot-washing doesn’t cleanse**... it also points to Christ’s incredible humility!
 - **Jesus washed Judas’ feet** even as He knew Judas had betrayal and false belief in his heart!

- ***Christ’s humility in the Incarnation***
 - There is an entire section of systematic theology called “humiliation” (of Christ or The Son), and it begins with His incarnation.
 - Christians are often familiar with the idea that God became man
 - John 1:1–4, 14 – “In the beginning was the Word, and **the Word was with God, and the Word was God**. He was in the beginning with God. All things were **made through him**, and without him was not any thing made that was made. **In him was life**, and the life was the light of men... 14 And **the Word became flesh** and dwelt among us...”
 - Hebrews 2:14 – “Since therefore the children share in **flesh and blood, he himself** [the Son of God] **likewise partook** of the same things...”

- Christians may not be as familiar with the idea of humiliation
 - Philippians 2:6–7 – “[the Son] **was in the form of God, [but] did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men.**”
 - Much ink has been spilled over what the term “emptied” (Greek: *ekenōsen*) means.
 - For our purposes today, we can at least say that there is some **humiliation** or **condescension** or **lowering** in the “emptying” and the taking on the “likeness of men.”
- Friends, let us not forget that **the coming of the Savior** for us was an **act of extreme humility** on God’s part!
 - When you think of the coming of the Savior, **are you offended** that God would stoop so low? If not, why not?
 - **Was Peter wrong** to be **offended** when he saw his **Master** and Lord on the **floor** in front of him, **dressed** as a lowly servant, **scrubbing** the dirt from his feet?
 - Do you think it was **befitting** for the **King** of glory to **dive** into the **sinful mire** where He found you?
 - Oh, let us **never lose sight** of the **scandal** here!
 - **His love** for us is a **sight to behold** precisely because it is a **scandalous love!**
- **Christ’s humility at the Cross**
 - Of course, the apex of Christ’s humiliation was the cross.
 - Think of how God the Son’s humiliation is described further
 - Philippians 2:6–8 – “[the Son] **was in the form of God, [but] did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being**

found in human form, **he humbled himself** by becoming obedient to the point of death, **even death on a cross.**”

- Christ’s death was humiliating because of the way He died
 - Hebrews 12:2 – “**Jesus [is] the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising [or disregarding] the shame...**”
 - Galatians 3:13 – “**Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us—for it is written, ‘Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree...’**”

Summary: God the Son willingly experienced great humiliation (from incarnation to death), and Jesus illustrated His humiliation by washing His disciples’ feet.

Segue: And Jesus’ acts of extreme humiliation provide a model to be followed.

(2) THE INSUFFERABLE EXAMPLE

- ***Christ meant to be an example***
 - “**12 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?** 13 You call me Teacher and Lord, and you are right, for so I am. 14 If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet. 15 For **I have given you an example**, that you also should do just as I have done to you” (v12-15)
 - I am **NOT saying** that Christ is **only an example!**
 - Jesus is not **another religious guru** who merely offers a new way to live.
 - Jesus doesn’t simply **show you a way** to get to God.
 - You cannot **save yourself by following** Christ’s example.
 - You cannot **live the gospel.**

- I **AM saying** that Jesus said, “**I have given you an example, that you also should do just as I have done to you**” (v15).
- And Jesus **immediately follows** this with, “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. **If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them**” (v16-17).
- Friends, the question is not, “**Should I follow Christ’s example?**”
- The question is, “**What is it about what Christ has exemplified that I should follow?**”
 - Jesus said, “If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, **you also ought to wash one another’s feet**” (v14).
 - However, this can be **somewhat ambiguous**.
 - Does Jesus intend to **institute a foot-washing ordinance** here?
 - Baptism, Lord’s Supper, and foot-washing?
 - What does He mean by “wash one another’s feet?”

(3) THREE PRACTICAL PRINCIPLES

- ***The New Testament’s call to follow Christ’s example***
 - Philippians 2:3–7 – “**Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant...**”
 - Using this passage as a help to understand what Christ means in John 13 (allowing Scripture to interpret Scripture), I’d like to mention 3 Practical Principles I believe Christ is commanding us to live by.

- **One:** Because Christ shared His own blessings or “inheritance” (v8) with those who had none, ***we should look to the interests of others.***
 - Jesus said, “If I do not wash you, you have no **share with me**” (v8).
 - Jesus’ inheritance of riches is beyond measure, and He willingly shares all that He has with unworthy sinners.
 - Sinners share in Christ’s “righteousness” (Rom. 3:22)
 - Sinners share in Christ’s “heavenly seat” (Eph. 2:6)
 - Sinners share in Christ’s “glory” (Jn. 17:22)
 - Sinners share in Christ’s “resurrection” (Rom. 6:5)
 - Friends, what do **you have** that you **guard from others**?
 - Is your time, treasure, and talent **aimed** at **fulfilling** your own **desires**?
 - How much time do you spend trying to **find out** what **needs** others might have in order for you to **fill them**?
 - Take an **honest assessment** today... do you **look** to the **interests of others**?
 - May God help us!
- **Two:** Because Christ is God and yet selflessly served others, ***we should count others more significant than ourselves.***
 - “**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. He **laid aside** his outer garments, and taking a towel, tied it around his waist. 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” (v3-5).
 - Christ was aware of His divinity. No one ever had as much reason to think of Himself as more significant!
 - And yet, Christ treated and served others in a way that gave some the impression that they were better than Him!

- Jesus' own brothers mocked Him (Jn. 7:3-5).
- People accused Him of being a demon-possessed crazy person (Jn. 7:20, 8:52).
- People used religious and racial slurs to ridicule Him (Jn. 8:48).
- One of His closest friends, betrayed Him unto death (Jn. 13:21-30).
- Christ's service was not based on what He got in return!
 - He counted others significant.
- Friends, how many of us think of **ourselves as more significant** than others?!
 - Even **when we do good** for others, do we not often think of **ourselves as better** than those we help?
 - When we offer **wise counsel**, do we not **pride ourselves** for being **wiser than our recipients**?
 - When we **financially give** to a friend in need, do we not count ourselves **worthy of praise** for such kindness?
 - Oh, friends, am I the only one who **sees fellow divine-image-bearers in misery** and sometimes **hard-heartedly** think that they are simply **reaping** what they have **sown**?
 - May God have mercy!
- **Three:** Because Christ came from the Father and fulfilled God's perfectly loving and wise intentions by humiliating suffering, ***we should trust God's purposes in the midst of our own humiliation and suffering.***
 - Jesus "**hour had come**" (v1), Judas was "**already**" a hearty tool of the "**devil**" (v2), and in the midst of that Jesus illustrated His exemplary posture and called His disciples to follow it (v12-15).
 - Christ's whole earthly life consisted of affliction.
 - I am not saying He was always miserable, but I am saying that Jesus' life was full of humiliation and suffering.

- AND this is exactly as the Father intended!
- Friends, if **Christ** is our **example**, then why do we sometimes **imagine** that **God’s intention** for His **children** must be to **avoid humiliation and suffering**?
 - Do you sometimes feel that **God has** somehow **forgotten** you **when suffering** is at your door?
 - Have you become **more anxious** because of the way **American culture** seems to be **turning against** biblical Christianity?
 - Do the **circumstances** of life in a **fallen world** make you **fearful**?
 - Oh, friends, **has our hope ever been** that this **world** would somehow become a **refuge** for weary Christians?
 - **Have we forgotten** that **humiliation** and **suffering** are the **guaranteed companions** of every **Christian** in this world (Matt. 10:24-25; Heb. 12:3-14)?
- Calvin: “**although** Christ is the Son, **beloved** before all others—**the** one in whom the Father’s soul delights— **we** nevertheless see how little ease and comfort Christ experienced (Matt. 3:17; 17:5). **Indeed**, it could be said that... His life was nothing other than a kind of perpetual cross... **Why**, then, would we exempt ourselves from the same situation to which Christ our head was subjected—**particularly** since He was subjected to suffering for our sake to provide for us a pattern of patience in Himself?”³
 - **May God teach us to trust in Him**; for He is indeed our **good** and **wise** and **sovereign** heavenly **Father**, and He is working all things for our good and His glory (Rom. 8:28).

³ Calvin, John. A Little Book on the Christian Life (pp. 57-58). Ligonier Ministries, Inc. - USA. Kindle Edition.

(4) APPLICATION: 4 QUESTIONS

1. *Have you embraced this humble Christ?*

- a. Have you swallowed your pride and welcomed the King of glory as He stooped to wash your feet?

2. *Do you / Will you look to the interests of others?*

- a. Christ has given us the perfect example, and He calls His followers to do as He did.

3. *Do you / Will you count others more significant than yourself?*

- a. Hasn't Christ reminded us both of our identity (washed sinners) and our duty (humility)?

4. *Do you / Will you trust God's purposes in the midst of our own humiliation and suffering?*

- a. Don't you see the example Christ is to us on this?
- b. God is much more interested in your holiness than He is in your happiness.
- c. God's design (His goal) for you is to love and trust Him above all else.
- d. Spurgeon: "I have learned to kiss the wave that throws me against the Rock of Ages"

SUGGESTED RESOURCES

For His Sake and For Your Joy, Go Low by John Piper

<https://www.desiringgod.org/messages/for-his-sake-and-for-your-joy-go-low>

Lord, Are You Going to Wash My Feet? by J.C. Ryle

<https://www.monergism.com/lord-are-you-going-wash-my-feet-john-136-15>

Christ the Example of Ministers by Jonathan Edwards

<http://www.biblebb.com/files/edwards/example.htm>

The Foot Washing by R.C. Sproul (audio)

<https://www.ligonier.org/learn/sermons/foot-washing/>

The Humble Love of Christ by John MacArthur

<https://www.gty.org/library/sermons-library/43-68/the-humble-love-of-christ>