

Have you been washed? Wash! (John 13:1-17)

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The Point: Disciples should serve with the extravagant love and humility displayed by Christ in the footwashing which symbolizes his saving cleansing in the cross.

1. Embrace the Enduring Love of the Savior (1-5)

“Now before the Feast of the Passover” (1): John has been developing the Passover theme through his Gospel. The Passover has its roots all the way back in Exodus 12 when Moses leads Israel out of slavery in Egypt (see Ex. 12:13-14). John is inviting us to see that in the footwashing there is an anticipation of Jesus’ own climactic Passover act as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world (1:29).

*“...when Jesus **knew** that his **hour** had come to depart out of this world to the Father...” (1):*

- Cf. 2:4; 7:30; 8:20; 12:23, 27

*“...having **loved his own** who were in the world, he loved them **to the end**.” (1):* Jesus is about to offer one final proof of his love (cf. 15:13).

- Response: Have you experienced the intense love of God?

*“...when the devil had already **put it into the heart** of Judas Iscariot...to betray him” (2):* Judas plays an important role in this narrative. Why introduce him here? See below.

*“...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” (3):* John wants you to see that Jesus knew all about Judas. Jesus also knows his status and his power. There’s not a more powerful demonstration of Jesus’ love for his enemies than this. Jesus practices what he preaches in Luke 6:27: “But I say to you who hear, Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you.”

The background and nature of footwashing (4-5):

In Jesus’ culture people walked long distances on dusty roads in sandals. The washing of feet was considered too demeaning for disciples and was assigned to non-Jewish slaves (looked down upon by both Jews and Gentiles). Jesus’ attire shows that he was adopting the dress of a slave, a dress that was looked down upon. Jesus adoption of the stance of a slave would have been shocking to his disciples and call for explanation.

2. Be Cleansed by the Sacrifice of the Savior (6-11)

The Spokesperson – Peter (6, 8)

The disciples must have been extremely embarrassed; most of them remained silent while Peter had to object. The emphasis of Peter’s words are: “Are you going to wash *my* feet?”

*“...you **do not understand** now; but afterward you will understand” (7):*

They can’t yet understand how Jesus must go to the cross and so they don’t understand the footwashing that anticipates it. They will understand only after the resurrection.

*“If I do not wash you, you have **no share with me**” (8):*

The point: unless the Lamb of God has taken away your sin, has washed you, you can have no part with him (see Heb. 9:22; Eph. 1:7; Acts 3:19).

- Personal Response: Have your sins been washed away? Faith and Repentance.

“Lord, not my feet only but also my hands and my head!” (9):

Peter’s response shows that he at least understood that he wanted to be with Jesus.

“The one who has bathed does not need to wash, except for his feet, but is completely clean. And you are clean...” (10): The disciples, having already put their faith in Jesus, are clean. Two different teachings from the footwashing:

1. 13:6-8: symbolizes the once-for-all act and the cleansing that one receives through initial faith and repentance which washes away all their sin. This cleansing can never be repeated.
2. 13:9-11: symbolizes the daily need for confession of sin as one battles sin in the flesh. This fits the theology of 1 John well (cf. 1 John 1:9).

- Personal Response: Are you in need of washing today from ongoing sin in your life?

“...but not everyone of you. For he knew who was to betray him; that was why he said, ‘Not all of you are clean.’” (11): This teaches that us that no rite, even if performed by Jesus himself, ensures spiritual cleansing (not even baptism).

3. Serve with Love and Humility like the Savior (12-17)

Footwashing also serves as an example of love and humility that followers of Christ should display. This will set them apart from the world as disciples of Christ (cf. John 13:35; 17:21, 23).

Background from the same supper in Luke 22:24: “A dispute also arose among them, as to which of them was to be regarded as the greatest.”

- Jesus shows no such boundaries on his humility. He stoops to the lowest of lows.
- The lesson is that we should follow his example in selfless service, supremely exemplified by his death on the cross (Phil. 2:5-11; Gal. 5:13).

What might it look like for you to follow the example of Christ?

- Should you practice footwashing today?
 - Nowhere in the NT or other early church documents is it ever treated as an ecclesiastical rite, ordinance, or sacrament (cf. 1 Tim. 5:10).
 - We would be wise to not raise something to the level of universal rite something that appears only once in Scripture.
- If not, then how to I follow the example of Christ?
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“Rather, let the greatest among you become as the youngest, and the leader as one who serves...But I am among you as the one who serves” (Luke 22:26-27).

“If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them” (John 13:17)