

# Christ on His Knees Portraying Humility

John 13:2-15

The essence of the Gospel is that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures (1 Cor. 15:3b-4).

We have gathered to remember Christ's death of that Cross this Good Friday Communion.

When Paul looked back at the Cross in Philippians 2:5-8, he explains what Jesus did as the ultimate example of self-sacrificing humility. Paul tells us that God wants us to:

## Embrace Christ's Attitude of Humility

Listen as I read those verses:

Philippians 2:5-8 (NKJV) Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, <sup>6</sup>who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, <sup>7</sup>but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, *and* coming in the likeness of men. <sup>8</sup>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.

God's Word here in Philippians 2, invites us to embrace Christ's attitude of servant-hearted, self-emptying humility.

The pathway of Christ was that of a servant.

The way of the Cross is the way of humility.

The way to be filled with God is to be emptied of self.

We all need reminders in:

## Learning How to Practice Humility

Christ's crucifixion on Good Friday was preceded by Jesus on His knees portraying humility before His disciples at the Last Supper on Thursday.

Each time we come as Christ's Church to Communion, we can remember how Jesus used that first Lord's Supper in His disciples lives.

Communion was launched by Jesus humbly kneeling, washing the feet of His proud disciples. In doing so, we see Jesus as Paul so well describes His "taking the form of a servant" in Philippians 2.

We are invited as believers who love and follow Christ

Tonight in Luke 22:24 we go back to THE Lord's Supper, by that I mean the first, the original, and the model for us from Jesus Christ Himself to us His Church.

On the night of the first Lord's Supper, Jesus models an attitude what we must choose to have each time we come to His Table.

Do you remember?

## **The Problem They Faced**

On the evening of the Last Supper there was a problem among His disciples that Jesus had to address.

While Satan waited at the door,  
While the High Priest plotted for Christ's life, and  
While the Roman cross stood, not far away...

A greater priority than all others was Christ's—His disciples had to be cleansed by Christ's humble, sacrificial love.

Often our lives have the same problem that Jesus saw among His disciples. Jesus knew that there was a competitive spirit in the hearts of His disciples.

In fact, approaching the Last Supper, the disciples were disputing over which of them was the greatest (Luke 22:24–30).

The hearts of His disciples contained un-forsaken selfishness, disagreements, and contentions.

They had allowed their jealousies, impatience, and ambition to pollute the hallowed atmosphere of worship; and none of those are acceptable at Christ's Table. Listen to Luke 22:24

“Now there was also a dispute among them, as to which of them should be considered the greatest.”

## **An Unforgettable Lesson in Humility**

So at that Last Supper, Jesus gave them an unforgettable lesson in humility.

By His actions, Jesus rebuked their selfishness and pride.

The more you think about this scene, the more profound it becomes.

It is certainly an illustration of what Paul wrote years later in Philippians 2:1–16. Peter must have recalled the event when he wrote his first epistle and urged his readers to “be clothed with humility” (1 Peter 5:5).

It is remarkable how often the Gospel of John reminds us of Christ's humility even while magnifying His deity:

“The Son can do nothing of Himself” (John 5:19, 30).

“For I came down from heaven, not to do Mine own will” (John 6:38).

“And I seek not Mine own glory” (John 8:50).

And of course, John ends with the account of Christ's ultimate expression of humility through His death on the cross.

## **Christ's Last Supper Message to Us**

As we turn onward to John 13, we enter into that night of nights.

It is Christ's last night on earth. It is Passover time and the Seder meal that both Christ and His disciples had participated in from their earliest childhood.

That first Lord's Supper night the disciples came troubled, unfocused, arguing, and out of step with Jesus.

They had everything on their minds but Him.  
That is the constant struggle that He had with them.

They thought of Earth as He talked of Heaven.  
They thought of their personal desires as He sought their devotion to Him.  
They were self-centered when He asked for them to be self-sacrificing.

John 13 is Christ's lesson on how to prepare for meeting Him at His Supper. Jesus teaches a life-changing lesson on the choices we must make in order to have a wonderful time dining with Him and enjoying the blessings of a meal with God.

This night is the night that marks the first Communion; and as we look back we see it was a night defined by humble sacrificial love.

The picture of humility is nowhere more clearly seen than in Jesus on His knees washing His disciple's feet.

Not just the good, He also washed the bad.

Not just the loyal, He also washed the traitor's.

Of all the pictures of Jesus's humble and sacrificial love, this is the most compelling.

## **Dirty Feet & Polluted Attitudes**

Sadly, even within sight of the Cross, the disciples were still arguing about which one was greater than the others. It was this very argument that produced the situation prompting Jesus to act out the role of their servant.

The roads of Palestine were un-surfaced and un-cleaned.

In dry weather they were inches deep in dust and in wet they were liquid mud.

The shoes ordinary people wore were sandals, which were simply soles held on to the foot by a few straps. They gave little protection against the dust or the mud of the roads.

For that reason there were always great water pots at the door of a house; and a servant was there with a pitcher and a towel to wash the soiled feet of the guests as they came in.

Jesus' little company of friends had no servants. The duties which servants would carry out in wealthier circles they must have shared among each other. It may well be that on the night of this last meal together they had got themselves into such a state of competitive pride that not one of them would accept the duty of seeing that the water and the towels were there to wash the feet of the company as they came in; and Jesus mended their omission in the most vivid and dramatic way.

This ought to make us think. So often, even in our churches and families, trouble arises because someone does not get his place.

In every sphere of life desire for prominence and unwillingness to take a subordinate place wreck the scheme of things.

A player is one day omitted from the team and refuses to play any more.

A member of a choir is not given a solo and will not sing any more.

In any society it may happen that someone is given a quite unintentional slight and either explodes in anger or broods in sulkiness for days afterwards.

When we are tempted to think of our rights, let us see again the picture of the Son of God, girt with a towel, kneeling at his disciples' feet. (Barclay, William, Daily Study Bible Series: The Gospel of John - Volume 2 Chapters 8-21 (Revised Edition), (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press) 2000, c1975.)

## Jesus Humbly Cleansed the Atmosphere of Worship

The Passover meal was about to start, but no one was willing to take the lowest job. In a home without slaves, someone (usually the lowest in rank) had to take a basin and wash feet before the meal. None of the disciples felt like serving that night.

During the long meal in reclining couches feet would be elevated from the floor and at the same level as faces.

Dirty feet would distract.

Dirty hearts would pollute.

So Jesus addressed their hearts as He washed their feet.

## Jesus Takes the Form of a Servant

Jesus girded Himself as the slave.

Jesus knelt before all of His men and took the lowest place.

The picture they got of Jesus was burned into their hearts forever.

Peter wrote of it, John wrote of it, and they talked so much about it that Paul also describes that humble servant attitude and action of Jesus.

What was Christ's answer to their selfishness? His humble love.

What was Christ's cure for their selfish ambition? His humble love.

So Jesus knelt before His disciples in complete contrast to self-seeking and serving Judas; and in rebuke to that same attitude of the Devil that was bubbling over in the stinky-feet, soiled-attitudes, and proud-hearts of Christ's disciples.

## We Are Completely Washed

The words used by the Spirit of God in John 13:5-14 have a deep spiritual application to our lives.

The first word is *nipto* (used in v. 5-6, 8, 12, and 14) and it means to cleanse or "wash a specific part of the body".

The second word is *louo* (used in v. 10) and it means: "to bathe all over".

The distinction between these words points to the importance of this foot-washing parable or illustration that Jesus was acting out before their eyes. He was demonstrating the elements of a godly walk.

At the instant of salvation: we are "bathed all over", our sins are removed, we receive a new heart, and we are completely forgiven (Revelation 1:5; Titus 3:3-7; 1 Corinthians 6:9-11). Jesus promises us that through His death he will "remember our sins and iniquities no more" (Hebrews 10:17). But, going through life in such a sin filled world leads to regular defilements. But as one united to Christ we do not need to get "saved again", we just need to have that specific stain, sin, or defilement cleansed away.

## The Essence of 1 John 1:9

That is the essence of 1 John 1:9 where we see that if we are constantly confessing our sins “washing a specific part” (that is the tense of the first verb) God is faithful and just to already once-and-for-all to have cleansed us “bathed all over” (that is the tense of the second verb).

What a comfort for us who slog through this muddy world that we don’t get unsaved when we sin; but we can’t enjoy the delights of our salvation as long as we carry the mud of the world upon our redeemed hearts.

We need to regularly repent, often confess, and always enjoy being washed by Jesus.

## Christ's Living Example

Foot washing was a parable, or a living illustration by Jesus of the character of His entire ministry.

Jesus was a humble servant to those He loved, and to those He led.

Jesus was showing them how He can enter into the world not to be served but to serve; and that was exactly the ministry He had called His disciples to follow.

John 13 beautifully parallels Philippians 2.

As Jesus rose from the supper in John 13, Jesus rose from the right hand of His Father to come to us.

Then at the Last Supper, Jesus laid aside His garments (John 13:4a) just as Paul says that Christ laid aside the blinding, glorious power of Deity to become incarnate.

Next, in John 13:4b Jesus “gird Himself” with the servant’s towel just as Paul says about Christ’s humbling Himself to take the ‘form’ of a servant. As Jesus poured water in a basin and began to wash the disciples’ feet, so in a few hours He would pour out His blood on the Cross, as an atoning offering for sin.

Then Jesus concludes His parabolic illustration of washing their feet with these words:

John 13:12-15 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? 13 “You call me Teacher and Lord, and you say well, 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 should do as I have done to you.

## We Need Daily Cleaning

Why is it so important that we “keep our feet clean”?

When we are defiled, we lose fellowship with our Lord.

That is what Jesus was saying to Peter when He said, “If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with Me” (John 13:8).

Christ's word translated "part" was *meros*, which means "participation, having a share in someone or something." Salvation was God "bathing us all over". Then God united us to Jesus in a settled relationship that cannot change.

We see this permanence in the verb *wash* in John 13:10; because it is in the perfect tense it means that the washing was settled once and for all.

Fellowship with Christ is tied to whether we keep ourselves "unspotted from the world" (James 1:27).

If we permit un-forsaken and un-confessed sin in our hearts and minds, our walk with the Lord gets obstructed; that is why we need to have Him wash our feet.

## **Ask Jesus to Wash You Now**