

**Service**  
Series: His Last Day  
John 13:1-17  
March 6, 2022

Welcome again to worship.

The story goes of a Roman Catholic priest who was making his way down an alley to his parked car, when a man suddenly emerged from the shadows, thrusting the muzzle of a revolver into his ribs, demanding, "Hand me your wallet!"

Offering no word of protest, the priest immediately began to comply. As he reached into his inside pocket, his clerical collar became evident in the dim light, catching the robber off guard.

"Are you a priest?" he asked.

"Yes, I am," the priest replied.

"Oh, I don't rob priests," the thief responded, "I'm Catholic, too."

Greatly relieved, the priest withdrew a cigar from his inside pocket and offered it to the penitent thief.

"Oh, no! I can't do that," the thief exclaimed, "I've given them up for Lent."

This thief was a man with convictions, which he refused to violate."<sup>1</sup>

Today is the first Sunday of Lent, the 40 days (not including Sundays) that we commemorate Christ's passion. Some people give up things, like thieves and cigars, as a way of self-sacrifice.

This year during Lent, we are beginning a new series, and the basis of this series, the kernel of the idea, came from a meme.

I tried to find it once again but couldn't. Thankfully, I wrote it down:

Sometimes I joke about what I'd do if I had one day left to live. Eat junk food, go crazy, etc. Today it hit me: Jesus knew. And He washed feet.

Our series is called "His Last Day." We are going to look at some very important chapters in the Gospel of John, chapters 13-16. These are often called the Upper Room Discourse, for Jesus taught His disciples in the Upper Room the night before He was crucified.

So, turn to page 5 in your bulletin, or if you are online, grab your spiritual journal and turn to John 13.

Now, I want to point this out at the very beginning of this message. Something is missing in John's account of Maundy Thursday. Something significant. Something that is quintessentially important in the Church, from its beginning to today. In fact, it is part of our worship today.

When you think of Jesus' final time with His disciples in the Upper Room, what do you remember happened? Think what Jesus instituted in the Upper Room.

The Last Supper. That's right.

But study John's account of Jesus' final day, and it is not there. No "this is my body given for you... this is the cup of the new covenant..." None of that.

All there is in the Gospel is a reference to it in verse 2:

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<sup>1</sup> Deffinbaugh, Bob. "Love and Liberty: Liberties Love Won't Take." Date unknown. Bible.org. 7 February 2007. [http://www.bible.org/page.php?page\\_id=2326](http://www.bible.org/page.php?page_id=2326), downloaded from sermoncentral.com

*It was time for supper...<sup>2</sup>*

A reference, but no description of it.

I believe John knew that the story had been told in Matthew, Mark, and Luke's Gospels. Plus, he had his own reasons, his own remembrances, that he alone shared. None of what is in John 13-17 is in the other Gospels, so he clearly had something else in mind. Let's take a look at it.

Now, throughout this series, like in the "Armor of God" series, I'm going to remind you over and over again the premise and context of the passage. It is Jesus' Last Day, the last 18-24 hours of His life. What does He feel is important to convey to the disciples, to us? What does He do?

**First, on Jesus' Last Day, He Knew His standing.**

Look at John 13:1:

*Before the Passover celebration, Jesus knew that his hour had come to leave this world and return to his Father...<sup>3</sup>*

Then verse 3:

*Jesus knew that the Father had given him authority over everything and that he had come from God and would return to God.<sup>4</sup>*

Jesus knew His standing. He knew that this was it. Only one more sunrise to go. This would literally be His last meal. But He knew more than that.

He knew He would be returning to the Father.

There is a great comfort in knowing, whether it is your last day or week or decade or more, where you will end up when you die.

So many do not.

For the atheist who doesn't believe in God, there is always the wonder that your entire life has been based on one huge mistake, and that all your thoughts have been utterly wrong, that you are a flat-earthier or a moon landing denier. You've been wrong all your life.

For the person who is marginal with God, the one who knows there is a God, but doesn't do anything about Him, there is always that worry that God would never accept them, because for most of their lives, they have never accepted God.

For the person who is trying to earn their way into heaven, by doing the right things, by going to church even when you don't feel like it, there is always a lingering fear that they've not done enough, that some mistake at the end will tip the scales in the wrong direction, and a life of trying to appease God is gone in the blink of an eye.

Then there are those who join the hymn writer in singing:

*But I know whom I have believed,  
and am persuaded that he is able  
to keep that which I've committed  
unto him against that day.<sup>5</sup>*

There is an assurance of faith that comes with knowing Scripture and believing His word. Paul writes:

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<sup>2</sup> John 13:2 (NLT2)

<sup>3</sup> John 13:1 (NLT2)

<sup>4</sup> John 13:3 (NLT2)

<sup>5</sup> Daniel W. Whittle. "I Know Whom I Have Believed." UM Hymnal #714

*And I am certain that God, who began the good work within you, will continue his work until it is finally finished on the day when Christ Jesus returns.*<sup>6</sup>

So many people do not know their standing. Jesus knew His standing, as should you, whether it is your first day or your last. Believe in Him and you will be saved.

**Second, on Jesus' Last Day, He loved.**

The second half of verse 1:

*He had loved his disciples during his ministry on earth, and now he loved them to the very end.*<sup>7</sup>

Can you imagine the depth of love Jesus had for His disciples? He had chosen them, taught them, walked with them. They were closer than His own brothers and sisters. He truly, truly, loved them. He prayed for them in His high priestly prayer of John 17:

*Holy Father, you have given me your name; now protect them [His disciples] by the power of your name so that they will be united just as we are.*<sup>8</sup>

Jesus' love for His disciples was one of the driving themes for the rest of John's Gospel.

Of course, He loved them no more than He loves us. Ephesians 5:2 reads:

*Live a life filled with love, following the example of Christ. He loved us and offered himself as a sacrifice for us, a pleasing aroma to God.*<sup>9</sup>

John also says that Jesus loved to the very end. He wasn't referring to the end of the meeting or the end of the supper. He was loving them all the way to the cross.

Even from the cross, He loved. He asked God to forgive those who were crucifying Him, "for they do not know what they are doing."<sup>10</sup>

I once heard a preacher say, "It wasn't the nails that held Christ to the cross. It was love."

On Jesus's Last Day, He loved.

**Third, on Jesus' Last Day, He denied Himself.**

Back to John 13, beginning at verse 4:

*So he got up from the table, took off his robe, wrapped a towel around his waist, and poured water into a basin. Then he began to wash the disciples' feet, drying them with the towel he had around him.*<sup>11</sup>

One commentator suggests that John 13:1 introduces the second half of the John's book. He suggests, "The Gospel of John has been building to this point, when the Lamb would take his place on the altar and his blood would spill out, bringing forgiveness of sin. We are marching deeper and deeper into the shadow of the cross; everything from this point on is leading us directly to that moment when Jesus would be suspended on that cursed tree for our sakes. For him to stop in the middle of that journey to wash the feet of his disciples is noteworthy. We need to feel the gravity of what he's teaching us."<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Philippians 1:6 (NLT2)

<sup>7</sup> John 13:1 (NLT2)

<sup>8</sup> John 17:11b (NLT2)

<sup>9</sup> Ephesians 5:2 (NLT2)

<sup>10</sup> See Luke 23:34

<sup>11</sup> John 13:4-5 (NLT2)

<sup>12</sup> Christ-Centered Exposition - Exalting Jesus in John 13:1-5

Of course, we know that the washing of the guests' feet was an expected service provided by the host. The roads of the time were either dusty or muddy, and you didn't want some guy's dirty feet near your face when you were trying to eat. Gross.

So, the host was to supply the servant who would wash the guests' feet. But apparently, the Upper Room was secured without a servant. And there were times when the same disciples were arguing who was the greatest or the closest to Jesus. No way was one of them going to stoop to do a servant's job.

#### THAT EVER HAPPEN IN YOUR HOUSE?

Jesus saw the disciples' reluctance. Maybe He even arranged with the owner of the Upper Room to not provide the servant. Why? Because on His Last Day, He was going to deny Himself. He was going to take a towel, wrap it around His waist, just like the lowliest servant would do, and wash His disciples' feet. Though He was God, He took on the lowest role and denied Himself.

#### **Finally, on Jesus' Last Day, He served.**

Beginning at verse 6:

*When Jesus came to Simon Peter, Peter said to him, "Lord, are you going to wash my feet?" Jesus replied, "You don't understand now what I am doing, but someday you will." "No," Peter protested, "you will never ever wash my feet!" Jesus replied, "Unless I wash you, you won't belong to me." Simon Peter exclaimed, "Then wash my hands and head as well, Lord, not just my feet!" Jesus replied, "A person who has bathed all over does not need to wash, except for the feet, to be entirely clean. And you disciples are clean, but not all of you." For Jesus knew who would betray him. That is what he meant when he said, "Not all of you are clean."<sup>13</sup>*

Jesus teaches us that no one is above serving. He doesn't deny His character by serving the disciples. His position, Who He is, makes this act of service even more profound. The service Jesus performs springs from love and humility.

We also learn that no one is below being served. In this chapter, we're reminded repeatedly about the upcoming betrayal by Judas. How many pairs of feet did Jesus wash? Twelve. Jesus even washed the feet of Judas, knowing full well what he was going to do. At this point, Judas was in league with Satan, but Jesus still stoops before him as a humble servant and slowly washes the caked dirt and grime off his feet. He carefully washes the feet of a traitor, just as he washed the feet of Peter, James and John.<sup>14</sup>

So, what are we to do about all this?

#### **We are to follow His example.**

Jump to verse 12:

*After washing their feet, he put on his robe again and sat down and asked, "Do you understand what I was doing? You call me 'Teacher' and 'Lord,' and you are right, because that's what I am. And since I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you ought to wash each other's feet. I have given you an example to follow. Do as I have done to you. I tell you the truth, slaves are not greater than their master. Nor is the messenger more important than the one who sends the message."<sup>15</sup>*

We are to follow Jesus' example in all things.

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<sup>13</sup> John 13:6-11 (NLT2)

<sup>14</sup> Christ-Centered Exposition - Exalting Jesus in John 13:1-5

<sup>15</sup> John 13:12-16 (NLT2)

- We are to know our standing with God.
- We are to love.
- We are to deny ourselves.
- We are to serve.

What follower of Jesus has the right ever to refuse serving? If our Master will humbly serve others, we are not exempt. We have no standing to say, "I'm too good to do that." We need to beware the excuses we make for not serving others. We need to trace them back to their source. Is this excuse I'm making a legitimate reason, or is it a conscience-soothing way of saying, "I'm too good to serve them" or "I'm too important to serve in that way"?

Would you have washed Judas's feet? One commentator wrote, "I've decided I would have cleaned his feet with some paint thinner and a match. Not Jesus. Is anyone going to do worse things to you than Judas did to Jesus? No."<sup>16</sup>

Verse 17:

*Now that you know these things, God will bless you for doing them.*<sup>17</sup>

I guess if you could summarize these concluding chapters with this verse: "Now that you know these things, God will bless you for doing them."

Do the things Jesus taught, and God will bless you.

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<sup>16</sup> Christ-Centered Exposition - Exalting Jesus in John 13:1-5

<sup>17</sup> John 13:17 (NLT2)