

## LOVING BY SERVING

Bible Background – JOHN 13:1-35

Printed Text – JOHN 13:1-15, 34-35

### Jesus Washes His Disciples' Feet

**13** Before the Passover celebration, Jesus knew that his hour had come to leave this world and return to his Father. He had loved his disciples during his ministry on earth, and now he loved them to the very end,

<sup>2</sup> It was time for supper, and the devil had already prompted Judas, son of Simon Iscariot, to betray Jesus.

<sup>3</sup> 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> So he got up from the table, took off his robe, wrapped a towel around his waist,

<sup>5</sup> and poured water into a basin. Then he began to wash the disciples' feet, drying them with the towel he had around him.

<sup>6</sup> When Jesus came to Simon Peter, Peter said to him, "Lord, are you going to wash my feet?"

<sup>7</sup> Jesus replied, "You don't understand now what I am doing, but someday you will."

<sup>8</sup> "No," Peter protested, "you will never ever wash my feet!" Jesus replied, "Unless I wash you, you won't belong to me."

<sup>9</sup> Simon Peter exclaimed, "Then wash my hands and head as well, Lord, not just my feet!"

<sup>10</sup> 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."

<sup>11</sup> For Jesus knew who would betray him. That is what he meant when he said, "Not all of you are clean."

<sup>12</sup> After washing their feet, he put on his robe again and sat down and asked, "Do you understand what I was doing?"

<sup>13</sup> You call me 'Teacher' and 'Lord,' and you are right, because that's what I am.

<sup>14</sup> And since I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you ought to wash each other's feet.

<sup>15</sup> I have given you an example to follow. Do as I have done to you.

<sup>34</sup> So now I am giving you a new commandment: Love each other. Just as I have loved you, you should love each other.

<sup>35</sup> Your love for one another will prove to the world that you are my disciples."

-----New Living Translation

### Lesson Introduction

Selflessly serving others is not always viewed in our society as an admirable way to interact with people. The world praises power, status, and privilege among the ambitious and those eager to "get ahead." But by the simple but revolutionary act of washing the Disciples' feet, Jesus established a new principle that Servanthood demonstrates God's command to love one another as He has loved us. This study should encourage us to repent of pride that prevents us from serving others as an expression of Christian love.

**Background:** With the beginning of John 13, Jesus’ public ministry has ended and He is alone with the Twelve. Of the Gospel writers, only John provides us with this intimate view of Jesus’ private teaching and prayer during His last days before death (John 13-17). John 13 records the events of the night before the Crucifixion—the eating of the Passover and the institution of the Lord’s Supper (cf. Matthew 26:17-29; Mark 14:12-25; Luke 22:7-38). Luke’s Gospel account informs us that sometime early during the Passover meal, an argument broke out among the disciples concerning who would obtain the highest rank in the coming kingdom. Jesus rebuked their self-centered arrogance. “In this world the kings and great men lord it over their people, yet they are called ‘friends of the people.’ But among you, it will be different. Those who are the greatest among you should take the lowest rank, and the leader should be like a servant” (Luke 22:25-26, NLT). Then He washed their feet, which visually demonstrated humble Servanthood. The Gospel of John does not record this heated discussion between the disciples or Jesus’ rebuke, but John does record for us the powerful, dramatic response on behalf of the Master Teacher. He demonstrated the meaning of true humility by washing the disciples’ feet.

-----*Precepts for Living*, the UMI Annual Commentary 2020-2021, p. 105

### **Jesus Displays Servanthood**

**John 13:1-5:** Jesus and His disciples were preparing to celebrate Passover and Jesus was taking this opportunity to prepare the Twelve for His approaching death. Jesus was aware that the time was near for Him to complete His mission on earth; that He soon would be betrayed; and that He would return to God from whence He had come. He also shared with them how they must live with one another after His departure. Jesus loved His disciples throughout His time with them and continued to love them to the end. This was the hallmark of all that Jesus had done. He demonstrated the love and humility they must show towards one another after His death through the foot washing. Luke 22:24 sheds more light on what precipitated this act. There was an argument as to who would be the greatest among them. By illustrating this picture of Servanthood, Jesus showed what true love and divine leadership looked like. Jesus washed the feet of his faithful followers and also His enemy, Judas, the one He knew would betray Him.

◆ *What “things” did the Father give to Jesus’ hands?*

### **Jesus Defines Servanthood**

**John 13:6-11:** Peter does not understand why Jesus is doing this so He resists the idea of the Master washing the feet of someone as lowly as he saw himself to be. Peter refused because he was only aware of the physical, not the spiritual implication of what Jesus was doing. Jesus acknowledged that Peter does not currently understand but will, after things have transpired. With no cleansing or washing, then Peter can have no “part” (Gk. *meros*, share, portion, piece or allotment) with Him. The word “wash” indicates the washing away of sins and without this spiritual cleansing we have no part in Christ. Although the concept of Jesus as a servant was new to the disciples, they learned that they are not the ones to dictate how Jesus moves in the lives of

those He loves. We should remember that concept as well. We come to the Lord on His terms, not ours.

After receiving Jesus' definition of Servanthood, Peter wants to be washed all over! But as Jesus explains, once you have already been cleansed all over, one only needs to wash the dust from ones sandaled feet to be clean again. And spiritually speaking, once a person has been cleansed from sins through faith in Christ, one only needs to confess those sins to be entirely clean again (1 John 1:9). But Jesus knowing what Judas was about to do, Jesus acknowledges that not all at the table were clean.

◆ *How do you explain Peter's not wanting Jesus to wash his feet?*

### **Jesus Explains Servanthood**

**John 13:12-15, 34-35:** In His explanation, Jesus told the disciples that as much as He is truly their Master, He has given them an example to follow. If He, as their Lord and Master could humble Himself to serve them in such a manner, they should do the same for one another. As Christians, humility is not a sign of weakness, as society then and now holds to be the case. Humility is a virtue and Jesus, Himself has set the example. The Old Testament commanded to love God only and to Love one's neighbor as oneself. But Jesus commanded to love as He does. He demands an everlasting and humbling love that is willing to die a sacrificial death for underserving sinners. He also calls for a love that acts. The love that the disciples were called to show for one another was a demonstrative love that would identify them as His disciples and would allow them to survive in a world hostile to them.

◆ *Is the command to "Love one another" a new commandment?*

### **Conclusion**

Jesus's example of servitude demonstrated by the washing of the disciples' feet is ours to emulate. His instruction to us is to live in harmony and love as we go about serving one another. There is no room for pride in this endeavor. Love is our trademark and by exhibiting this type of humble love, we show an evil world that we are indeed His disciples. By our love-based actions, the world will recognize that we belong to the Father.

### **Sources:**

Banks, M. (Ed.). (2020). Love For One Another. *Precepts for Living*, 23(Fall Quarter), 101-111. The Urban Ministries, Inc. Annual Commentary 2020-2021.

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**Lesson for Next Week – November 8, 2020 – Study Guide 10****ABIDING LOVE**

Bible Background ♦ JOHN 14:4-17

Printed Text ♦ JOHN 15:4-17

Devotional Reading ♦ PSALM 80:7-19

**Daily Bible Readings****MONDAY**

God Is Disappointed with Israel  
(Isaiah 5:1-7)

**TUESDAY**

God Will Redeem Israel  
(Isaiah 27:2-6)

**WEDNESDAY**

Believers Continue God's Work  
(John 14:8-14)

**THURSDAY**

Jesus Freely Lays Down His Life  
(John 10:11-18)

**FRIDAY**

Facing the World As Jesus Did  
(John 15:18-25)

**SATURDAY**

Jesus Tends to His Vineyard  
(John 15:1-3)

**SUNDAY**

Always Love One Another  
(John 15:4-17)