

Heart of God Revealed

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[0 : 0 0] Well, good morning, everyone. It's a privilege to be here and to be able to open up God's Word this morning. Thank you, Tofell, for reading that passage. And what an amazing passage we have this morning.

It's been a real privilege to be able to read it these last couple of weeks and to really get into it and to see what it means. You know, we've been in John, John's Gospel, written by John.

And just a reminder, at the end it says that chapter 20, verse 31, John wrote this Gospel, this account of Jesus' life, so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you might have life in his name.

That was why John wrote this. Now we're in chapter 13. A bit of context. We had a break last week when we had the church weekend. So it's been a whole two weeks and our minds are weak and sometimes we need reminders, don't we, of where we've been.

So in chapters 11 and 12, we had the raising of Lazarus. This was really the pinnacle of Jesus' public ministry. He raised Lazarus back from the dead, his friend.

[1 : 1 0] And you know, this really sealed his fate. This was the last straw and the Jews said, that's it, we will kill him. And yet despite this, Jesus travels to Jerusalem, the home of the Jews, and he has his triumphal entry.

And two weeks ago, it was Wayne from Corrobbers, he was speaking to us, and he was saying that Jesus' last public words cause people to believe or to not believe.

That is the two choices. And in chapter 12, verse 44, you might see it there. Jesus cries out. His last public words, he cries out.

And essentially what he is saying is believe. So this marks the start of a new section that will run pretty much until the end of John.

So chapter 13, and really here, this is the heart of God revealed to us. Where are we? Well, we are in the upper room.

[2 : 0 9] That is where this takes place. Jesus is with his disciples, the 12. So the 13 of them are there. And it is only, well, less than 24 hours before Jesus will be hanging on the cross as we have sung about already this morning.

So this is the start of a section where we have his farewell teaching. He is telling his disciples how to live in the world after he goes. They don't realize that, but that is what he is teaching them about.

And this particular passage that we have read is only in John's gospel. So it is unique to that. So our outline for today, I left my clicker down there, so could you put one on?

There we go. So John 13, 1 to 20. And we're looking at it in humbleness, and we're going to see holiness, and we're going to see happiness. So let's start with humbleness.

So what is the best thing that someone has ever done for you? I imagine there'd probably be varying responses. There might be, you know, some quite amazing stories of what people have done for you in your life.

[3 : 2 2] Well, this is quite an amazing thing that Jesus does here, and it's pretty unique. So let's go through it. We see that it was just before the Passover festival, and we have this phrase that Jesus knew that the hour had come for him to leave this world and go to the Father.

Now this hour that it speaks of, it's a bit of a theme in John, and it tracks the way through the gospel. Now most of the time it says, his hour has not yet come. His hour has not yet come.

His hour has not yet come. And yet here, his hour had come. It was his appointed time. It's an interesting study if you want to go away and look at these hours in John's gospel.

So his hour had come, and it says that having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end. Now really what that's saying is he loved them to the full.

He loved his disciples. That is who he is speaking to here. So we're in the upper room. In verse 2, the evening meal was in progress. It was the end of the day.

[4 : 31] And we see that Judas has already been prompted by the devil, and he's going to betray Jesus. Judas knew at this point what he was going to do.

And Jesus knew at this point what Judas was going to do. And finally, verse 3, to sort of set the scene here, we have this amazing verse that Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under his power, and that he had come from God and was returning to God.

You know, just last week at the weekend, we were looking at being made in the image of God, the identity crisis that faces so many in the world. And yet Jesus, he had no doubts about his identity. He knew that all authority was given to him. Everything was under his power. We know that. We've seen this. The storm was calmed. He rebuked the fever. He raised Lazarus.

All things were under his control. And we also see the relationship that he has with God the Father. He had come from him, and he was returning to him.

[5 : 39] What a high position he came from. And he knew where he was going. There was no doubt. And so that sets our scene for what Jesus does next.

Verse 4, So he got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist. After that, he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples' feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around him.

What? We shouldn't read that and just nod along as if that's a normal thing to do. The Son of God, the one who had all things under his power, he had that authority, that relationship with the Father that was so unique, was on his knees, semi-naked, washing the disciples' feet.

Even Judas. Imagine the silence in the room. What's going on? What is he doing? You know, this is the heart of God revealed to us.

This is the servant king. Humbleness and service. How would you spend your last few hours on earth if you knew what they were?

[6 : 56] We have quite the phenomenon, don't we? The bucket list. What are we going to do before we kick the bucket? I want to skydive. I want to see K2. I want to do this, do that.

You know, it's a kind of nice thing, some things we might want to tick off, the things we want to do in our lives. But you know, I bet not many people have this on their bucket list. I want to wash my friend's feet.

Now, there is cultural context to this, so it does seem more strange to us than it would to the disciples. You know, in that day and age, they would wear the open sandals.

In my head, I go back to when we used to learn about the Romans at school, and you kind of see those open leather things. You know, they would get dirty feet. It was dusty. It was dry. It was a muddy land.

They would, during the day, they would get dirty feet. And this was the evening. We've read that already. And we saw just, it was just a few days ago, a couple of chapters ago, that Mary, she washed Jesus' feet with that expensive ointment.

[7 : 58] This was a common practice. But you know, it was the lowest of the low of the servants that did it. If you went to someone's house, the most junior of servant, that would be their job.

They would wash your feet so that you could go to the table and you would have your feet cleaned for the evening meal. And we don't know, it doesn't say whether someone had already washed the feet of everyone that was there.

I think not. I think it was just 13 of them in this room. But you know, what I think for sure is that the disciples, they hadn't thought to do it. They hadn't crossed their minds.

Maybe I should wash Jesus' feet. What a day he's had. That would be a good thing to do. Do you want to know where the disciples' heads were at? Well, we see it in Luke 22, verse 24.

It says, a dispute also arose among them as to which of them was going to be regarded as the greatest. That was the discussion they were having in the upper room before the meal started.

[9 : 06] What a contrast to where Jesus' heart was at. Jesus here, he's setting them an example as we will see in the next section and at the end, while he was also speaking to them about their position before God and what that means.

Jesus, before he goes on at the end of chapter 13 and then through chapters 14 to 17 to teach them wonderfully about how to be without him.

First of all, he sets them a physical example of how to conduct themselves, how they should be. humbleness. So that brings us nicely to our second section of holiness.

Now I wonder if you have a friend that maybe speaks before they think. It just comes out. A few wry smiles, you've maybe thought of someone. And you know there is. We all do it at times.

We just say something and then, oh, can't get that back, can we? You know, that's a bit like Peter. At first we have this, you know, first glance, we have this slightly odd section between Peter and Jesus.

[10:16] And it, you know, it is at first glance, it is a bit strange, but as we get into it, it is really wonderful. So Simon Peter, he's going around washing the disciples' feet, Jesus is.

And Simon Peter goes to him, Lord, are you going to wash my feet? He's incredulous. You can't be doing that. You're Jesus. You're the Lord.

You know, I think there's a wee bit of human embarrassment here, isn't there? We sometimes don't like people doing things for us. We're sort of a, it's a false humility, isn't it?

And he disobeys. Jesus says, you don't realize now what I'm doing, but later you will understand.

And Peter says, no, you shall never wash my feet. He says no to the Lord, the ruler of all things.

And you know, just as a wee aside, and it is just a side note, verse seven, I think it's wonderful that it's so true. Jesus says, so graciously, you do not realize now what I am doing, but later you will understand.

[11:23] And you know, maybe there's people here and they're going through things and you don't know, you just don't get it. What is going on, God? What is going on? And you know, God knows what he's doing and later we will understand.

And I think as we go through life, we look back and we go, of course, of course. It's a little bit like Santa at the moment. You've probably seen her, blonde, running around, winding up all the other children.

But you know, she's at that stage, she wants to try things. The other day, she stood on her little, it's a little mouse that she can ride around on. It's got wheels. So she stood on it and she went to jump off it.

I said to her, no, you can't do that because it might slip. You will fall and you will hurt yourself. And she looks at me and she goes, that's not going to happen. Come on. And I say to her, no, you don't get it, but one day you'll see that that's not the right thing to do.

It's a wee bit like that. So anyway, that was just an aside. But in verse nine, well, at the end of verse eight, Jesus answered, unless I wash you, you have no part with me.

[12:26] You have no sharing of what I have to offer. And so Peter, he's overzealous. He just doesn't quite get it. And he goes, well then Lord, wash not just my feet, but my hands and my head as well.

Cover me. So once again, Jesus, he's just so patient with him. He says in verse 10, those who have had a bath need only to wash their feet, their whole body is clean and you are clean, though not every one of you.

For he knew who was going to betray him. And that was why he said, not everyone was clean.

Now, what is this saying? Now, it is physically true, isn't it?

If we'd have a bath and we're walking around with bare feet, yeah, we just need to wash our feet.

But you know, it's speaking of our salvation. Stick with me here.

It's quite heavy going, but, you know, it's really good to look at these things. And we have to remember that he is speaking specifically to the disciples in this moment of time, that we can certainly apply it to our own lives.

[13:32] So what he is saying is that those who are saved, those who have had a bath, those who are saved by the redemptive work of Jesus on the cross have had their sins forgiven.

They have been made clean. Jesus, just the next day, he goes to the cross. He takes the punishment for us on the cross. He dies.

He rises again and he goes back, ascends to the Father on high. He did that work, that redemptive work. And so if we trust in that, and I implore you, if you don't, then please look into these things.

It is the most important thing. But once we have done that, once we accept Jesus for what he has done, then our position is secure in Christ. There's no changing that.

We are secure in him. We have been cleaned. Makes me think of the hymn, Have you been to Jesus for the cleansing power? Are you washed in the blood of the Lamb?

[14 : 34] But you know, despite this, we live in a world that is still not right. We heard Graham's prayer. You know, we look at the news. The news is sometimes a terrible thing to turn on, isn't it?

As we live in the world, we are defiled by sin. Our feet get dirty, don't they? You know, I didn't actually mean this at all, but this morning I looked at my shoes and they were covered.

So I got out a baby wipe and I cleaned them to try and look a little bit more presentable this morning. But that's it, isn't it? As we walk through life and we are defiled by sin, we mess up.

I mess up. I don't need to tell you that you mess up. We are not perfect. We live in this fallen world. Now that doesn't change our position. We are positionally saved, but conditionally we still have sin. So what do we do about this? Do we go home? Right, I'm skipping lunch. I need to go back and wash my feet as soon as possible. But what that means is we need to be washed with the word of God.

[15 : 41] It cleanses us. It sets us right again so that we can have that right and proper relationship. Let me stress, our position is secure, but we need to maintain that relationship that we have.

We need to be cleansed of daily sin which hinders our relationship. You know, there's a great example of this found in the Old Testament. The priests, they would be fully washed before they became a priest.

And there was this bowl, I suppose a bit like what Jesus took, called a laver. And before they went into the tabernacle, they would have to wash their hands and wash their feet before they could go in and do service for God.

To serve God well first, we must be right ourselves. So to finish this section in 11, we see that Judas will betray him.

He says, you are clean, Peter, but not every one of you. Because Judas, he was going to betray him. Not everyone was clean. You know, Judas, he hadn't had a bath.

[16 : 50] He didn't believe. He didn't trust in the Lord Jesus. His feet were washed here, but it was useless because he wasn't in the right position to start with. You know, reading the Bible, attending church this morning, speaking about Christian things, having Christian friends, family, these things are all good in themselves, but it's no replacement for accepting Jesus as your own personal Savior.

So that's been holiness. And so finally, happiness. C.S. Lewis says this, he says, God cannot give us a happiness and peace apart from himself because it is not there.

There is no such thing. Jesus, he finishes washing their feet, he puts his clothes on and he goes back to his place at the meal and he asks them what is certainly a rhetorical question, do you understand what I have done for you?

Now, I think the stunned silence probably answers that question. No, they do not. So he explains, you call me teacher and Lord and rightly so, for that is what I am.

Jesus, he is the instructor, the teacher, he has been teaching them all along and he is also Lord over them, he is in charge, he is the master.

[18 : 22] Jesus says, if that is who I am, I rightly hold these positions, can do this for you, then you disciples, you can also act in this way. Now that I, your Lord and teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet.

In verse 15, he says, further, he says, I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. Once again, he is speaking specifically to the disciples but we can apply this to Edinburgh in 2023.

Now, we have this two-fold message. First of all, as we have already thought about, we are to wash one another in the word. We are to confess sins, we are to share the gospel, we are to speak Jesus into each other's lives.

This can take many forms, it could be our growth groups. They are set up to have open, frank discussions with one another. Alistair last weekend, he challenged us in the time of tea and coffee, what are we talking about?

Are we chatting about the latest news or sport or whatever? Or are we asking, you know, how's your prayer life? How's your daily devotion? How's your walk with the Lord?

[19 : 38] Are we praying with one another? And you know, the gospel, it's wonderful because it allows us to be open and frank with one another in a totally unique way. It allows us to have these chats with people that we've just met as well as those that we've known for a long time.

I remember sometimes going on holidays as a family when I was younger and we'd go to the local church, we'd walked in. But you know, you still have that instant bond with people because you share the Savior.

So that's one side of it. You know, we are also to physically serve one another. That may take many forms and it'll be different for each one of us, but that is the attitude that we are to have, to serve one another.

Verse 16, it emphasizes here that the disciples were sent by the Master, by the Lord. You know, it says at the start, yours might say very truly, depending what you're reading or the old would say verily, verily.

And you know, that's an old phrase when Microsoft Word says to delete the second letter, the second word because it's repeated. But it meant verily, verily. It said, when Jesus said this, it meant, pay attention.

[20 : 54] If you've switched off, this is the time to switch on. That's what this meant. You know, what it's saying is that they have to do as he did. They are not too good.

The disciples are not too good to do as Jesus did, to wash feet. You know, they were discussing who is the greatest and Jesus here, he just puts them in their place.

I loved Mark last week when, wasn't exactly what he said, but something along the lines of, Christians, well, they're Jesus people doing Jesus stuff. I thought that was great.

And you know what? What is Jesus stuff? Is it walking around, head up, taking the praise? No, this is Jesus stuff. Servant leadership shown ultimately by the servant king.

this is a massive challenge for leaders, myself as an elder included. Servant leadership. And so verse 17, now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them.

[22 : 00] That is where we get this theme of happiness from. That's what this blessed means. It's not prosperity, it's not wealth, it's not fame, popularity, it's joy. It's joy.

You know, this position of service that the Lord Jesus shows, it comes from a place of love. We saw that in verse 1, having loved his own to the full.

You know, that makes it easy for Jesus because of the love he had for his disciples. We are to have love for our brothers and sisters in Christ. And if we do truly have that, then to serve one another will just come naturally.

It will not be a grind, it will not be something that we don't actually want to do. Once again, last week, Mark was speaking on deny yourself, deny self, take up your cross and follow me.

Last week in embassy, we were discussing after the sermon a wee bit, you know, about those who have everything in this world. They tend to be, you know, older, rich men living in big mansions, anything they could ever want, but they're on their own and they've got broken relationships and they aren't happy.

[23 : 19] And once again, C.S. Lewis, he says this, don't let your happiness depend on something that you may lose. the Bible picture of happiness is so radically different to what the world would say.

So to finish, we have Judas excluded. I am not, this is verse 18, I am not referring to all of you, I know those I have chosen, but this is to fulfill this passage of scripture, he who shared my bread has turned against me.

This is only for those who follow him. That is the position we must start by following him. It's speaking of Judas' betrayal which we will go into next week.

And this bit that is quoted, it might be in quotation marks, is Psalm 41 verse 9 where David is speaking about betrayal by his own family. And it's a fulfillment of that prophecy.

Jesus likewise says, I'm telling you now before it happens so that when it does happen, you'll believe that I am who I am. Now this I am, if you like homework, this is another great study.

[24 : 29] The I am's of John's gospel. You know, that's speaking of his deity. This is Jehovah of the Old Testament. It's speaking of the Trinity and that relationship that they have.

You know, I must think, I've been thinking about this this week, that the disciples, they must have looked back. You must have looked back once Jesus was gone and thought, ah, obviously.

Why didn't we get it? Why didn't we get what he was saying? What was going on? And verse 20, another verily, verily, whoever accepts anyone I send accepts me and whoever accepts me accepts the one who sent me.

That's the relationship between the Father, the Son, and the disciples here. Jesus is saying, I am going. I am away. But the work will continue through you, the disciples.

And likewise, it's still ongoing now through us if we are followers of the Lord. So, that's us this morning.

[25 : 38] Let me just sum up where we've been. So, we've seen humbleness, we've seen holiness, and we've seen happiness. We must serve, but we must also allow others to serve us.

That is part of it. Peter, he was too proud. You can't serve me. You know, Jesus, as we talked about, he was anointed by Mary.

His feet were washed, but he also washed the disciples' feet. We are to wash one another with the word. Get involved with your growth groups.

the general chat that will go on just in a minute. Pizza and prayer tonight, what a great opportunity to speak to one another, pray with one another, be concerned for one another.

And we need to be cleansed daily to maintain that right relationship so that we can serve. So, action stations, covet humble work, thankless tasks behind the scenes, and a special challenge for leadership to be examples.

[26 : 48] You know, Jesus' life purpose, it was to reveal God's nature as a being of self-giving love. We saw that last week. God didn't need us.

He's self-sufficient. And yet, look how Jesus served us. He died, allowing our sins to be forgiven. Therefore, as disciples of him, acts of loving generosity are to be the hallmark of Jesus' followers.

Acts of loving generosity. Let me just pray before Graham comes up and takes us through communion. God and Father, just thank you so much for your word.

We thank you for the truth that we can see in it, that it cleanses us and that it sorts us out when we have messed up. We pray that as we move into a time of communion, remembering what the Lord Jesus did on the cross, that these things will just really hit home with us and that it will change how we live and our attitude in everything.

So we just thank you so much for the Lord Jesus and for the cross. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.