

Serving Like Jesus

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 18 April 2025

Preacher: Craig Campbell

[0 : 00] Well, thank you very much, Alistair, for reading that passage for us. We are going to be spending the next 20 minutes or so looking at this passage in John 13.

! I should introduce myself. I'm Craig. I'm a pastor in training here at Brunnsfield. And I want to extend Graham's welcome, especially if this is your first time here, or maybe you've not come here too many times before. You're very welcome here.

As Graham said, this is Good Friday. This is one of the most important events. In the Christian calendar. And Graham stole my thunder already. In my introduction, I was going to ask ourselves, why is this day called Good Friday? Now, you may have seen this cartoon. It's maybe a little bit far away. I'll read it out for you. You may have seen it before.

I hate the term Good Friday. Why? My Lord was hanged on a tree that day. If you were going to be hanged on that day and he volunteered to take your place, how would you feel? Good. Have a nice day.

Now, the reason Good Friday is called Good is because our Lord Jesus chose to die in our place on the cross so that we wouldn't have to.

[1 : 23] That is what Good Friday is all about. And we know that Easter Sunday is coming. We know that Jesus has risen. But we pause on Friday to reflect on the love and the humility of Jesus and the depths that he went to to save sinners like us.

So that's what we're going to do this evening. But you may be asking, why are we spending our evening thinking about John 13? A passage all about feet.

Now, that's a very good question. John 13 may seem like an odd place to go on Good Friday, but it is full of reflections of the cross.

John 13 is great because we see Jesus in action and his actions, his love and his humility all point towards the cross where his love, grace and humble service was ultimately displayed.

So it's my intention this evening to keep pointing forwards from John 13 to the cross to show how Jesus's love was fully displayed.

[2 : 37] So our big idea tonight is that Jesus lovingly and humbly invites all people to come to him to be washed clean from their sins and to follow in his example of love and service.

That is the big idea that we're thinking about tonight. So do come along with me as we track through this story. Keep your Bibles open in front of you. We're going to make lots of references to the verses in the chapter.

And we're going to start in verses 1 to 5. So just a run through of what we're going to look at. We're going to start in 1 to 5 and see that Jesus serves his followers because he loves them. Then in verses 6 to 11, we'll focus on the humility of Jesus and see how he humbly invites everyone to come to him and be washed from sin.

And then finally, we're going to look at verses 12 to 17 and we'll see that Jesus gives his followers an example to follow. So that's where we're going tonight. So let's start in verses 1 to 5.

Jesus serves his followers because he loves them. Now, this story features Jesus and his disciples and they are spending time in Jerusalem.

[3 : 51] And we see in verse 1 that they are on the cusp of a really important festival. That is the festival of Passover. Now, Passover was a celebration of God's rescue of his people, the Israelites, from slavery in Egypt.

And so they meet every year to celebrate and to remember that time. So the disciples and Jesus, they're gathered together for this festival. And the next thing we're told is that an evening meal is in progress.

They are enjoying the Passover supper together. Now, this is the meal that is famously known as the Last Supper. You may have heard of that.

It's depicted in a very famous piece of art. And it is the last meal that Jesus shared with his disciples before he went to his death and before he was resurrected.

And in John's Gospel, there are five chapters devoted to the events and the discourse which takes place at this meal. So it is a very important scene, the Last Supper.

[4 : 58] Now, looking at our passage in verse 1, we're told that Jesus knew that the time had come for him to leave the world and go back to the Father.

We see that in verse 1. Now, this means that he has entered the last and most important scene of his life, of his earthly ministry.

He knows what is coming in the next 24 hours. His death on the cross, his resurrection from the dead, and finally, his ascension to heaven.

That's all to come very soon. And Jesus' imminent suffering on the cross for the sins of the world, it's fully on his mind at this moment during this meal.

Now, it's probably not something that you've ever thought about before, but how would you prepare if you knew you were about to suffer a horrible death?

[6 : 03] That's a bit of a grim thought, isn't it? How would you prepare yourself if you knew that was coming? I think I would give up. I think I would curl up in a ball.

I want it to pass quickly. Or maybe I would try and run away and delay the inevitable. What would you do? Well, despite heading towards a horrible death, Jesus wasn't concerned about saving himself.

He wasn't concerned about running away. His greatest concern was for his followers, his disciples. Now, we're told in verse 1 that having loved his disciples up till now, Jesus chose to love them to the end.

Literally, Jesus chose to love them to the uttermost. Everything Jesus was about to do, from the foot washing to his suffering and death on the cross, he did it because of his immense love for his followers.

Now, we have a very low view of love in our society, in our world. What are some of the things that we say that we love?

[7 : 17] What do you love? Well, I love pizza. I love dogs. I love the Star Wars franchise. That's a bit of a controversial one.

Not everybody does. And I love the Scottish Islands. I love getting out and about. Now, maybe some of you might say that you love your family. You love your children or your parents or your spouse or your siblings.

What do you love? Who are the people that you love? How far does your love go? How much do you love the things that you love and the people that you love?

Can you quantify it? Or to ask a slightly different question. How much does God love us?

Now, because of our fallen view of love, because we're sinners, we fail to appreciate the magnitude of Jesus' love for us.

[8 : 18] The love that we experience for others is only a shadow of the immense love that Jesus has for us. And I don't think we'll fully grasp how great Jesus' love is for us in this life.

But Jesus loved his followers, and he demonstrated that by stooping low and washing their feet. What a strange thing to do. We're going to think a little bit more about that in a minute.

But this was just a reflection of the ultimate expression of his love. As I said before, in less than 24 hours' time, Jesus would die for the ones that he loves.

For his disciples, for his followers, but also for you and I. He died for us, too, on that cross. But apart from dying, what was Jesus doing on the cross?

Well, he was willingly enduring the punishment of God that we deserve for our sins. Every wrong thought, every wrong word or deed that we have done, that judgmental thought that we've had for somebody else, that impatient word that we said that we snapped, or that selfish action that we performed.

[9 : 49] Jesus hung on the cross and suffered for that action, and for that thought and for that word and every other sin that we have committed in our lives, so that we wouldn't have to bear the punishment for it.

So what was he doing? He was willingly suffering the punishment that we deserve for everything that we've done. And why did he endure it for us?

Because he loves us to the uttermost. So in the last days and hours of Jesus' life, he sets his sights on the cross.

He knows what it will cost him, but he goes towards it, because he loves undeserving sinners like you and I, and he loves us to the uttermost.

Now the other thing that we see in these first few verses is that Jesus knows certain things. Now I wondered, as we went through the passage, and you can look at it again now, I wondered if you noticed all the kind of knowing or understanding language that we see.

[11:01] I counted seven instances of the words knowing or knew or understanding. But what does Jesus know?

And what is the significance of him knowing these particular things? Well, in verse 1, Jesus knows that his death was imminent.

Now, maybe if you saw it in verse 2, Jesus knows that his death is imminent, but there is a certain trouble brewing in the background.

Satan is at work. He wishes to unsettle Jesus, to distract him. He wishes to swerve Jesus from his path of salvation.

We're told that Satan had already prompted Judas to betray Jesus. Satan uses someone who is close to Jesus, someone who Jesus loves with that great love that we thought about a minute ago.

[12:06] But Jesus is not unaware. The next thing that we see that Jesus knew, it's all the way in verse 11, halfway through. Jesus knew who was going to betray him.

What else does Jesus know? Verse 3, In other words, Jesus knows that he had true power and control in this situation.

And we're told that Jesus knew where he had come from. And we're told that Jesus knew where he was going. Jesus had come from the throne room in heaven.

Then he stepped down into earth. And Jesus was going back to that throne very soon after his death and resurrection. And as Jesus later hung on the cross, it looked like he had lost.

It looked like the forces of evil had won. But even then, as Jesus gasped and struggled for breath, he knew in that moment that the whole of the created order was under his control.

[13:17] Even in that moment, Jesus was holding the universe together by the power of his word. What an amazing thing. And as those mockers taunted him and told him to come down from the cross, if you are indeed the Son of God, why don't you bring yourself down?

Why don't you come off that cross? It doesn't look like you're so great after all. Jesus knew that he could come down, didn't he? But he chose to remain there to keep suffering until his last breath because of his tremendous love for us.

He chose to remain on the cross knowing that he was suffering and dying to buy back the people that he loved from the curse of sin. And he chose to remain on the cross knowing that his destiny with the Father on the throne of heaven was sure.

Can you imagine a greater expression of love? Do you know of a greater expression of love? Often when we watch movies and we see great examples of sacrifice, Hollywood is just copying this idea of Jesus.

I don't think we know of a greater expression of love. Now, on the cross, Jesus was fulfilling the very words that he would go on to say a few minutes later to his friends in chapter 15.

[14:49] Jesus says that greater love has no one than this, that someone laid down his life for his friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you.

Jesus lays down his life for his friends. That is you and I today. So with these things in his mind, what's in his mind? So his imminent death is in his mind, the forefront of his mind.

In his mind is his tremendous love for his disciples and also in his mind, that knowledge of his power and his destiny. And with these things in his mind, he rises up from the table.

He takes off his outer garment. He wraps a towel around his waist. He prepares a bowl of water and he begins to wash and dry the feet of his disciples.

Did you see the meticulous description of Jesus' actions in these verses? The writer uses six verbs. When he could have just used one or two, he could have just said, Jesus got up and started washing the disciples' feet.

[15 : 59] This is a very visual scene. You can almost picture Jesus doing these things. Getting up, taking his outer garment off, wrapping a towel around his waist, filling the bowl with water, and then bending down.

And you can imagine the disciples looking on, slightly stunned. Okay, so let's look at our next part. So verses six to 11, Jesus humbly invites everyone to come and be washed from sin. So let's get back into the action in chapter 13.

Jesus comes over to Peter with a bowl of water and he expects to watch Peter's feet. Now, that might seem like a strange thing to do, but at that time in the first century in Jerusalem, this was a perfectly normal thing to do.

It was a hot country and these folks likely went around wearing sandals. And by the end of the day, their feet would have been filthy. Their feet would have been covered in sweat and dust and dirt and dung that lay all over the streets in Jerusalem.

[17 : 15] So it was normal on entering someone's home to have your feet cleaned. maybe by a servant if you entered a house of someone who was rich.

So, what is unusual in this instance is that Jesus performs his action in the middle of the meal. I don't know if you noticed that in verse two, that the meal has already begun.

It's in progress. You've got to ask yourself the question, why had this not been done already? Why didn't someone else stoop to wash their feet?

Wasn't there a servant in attendance to do this? Why didn't one of the disciples do it? These are questions that we don't have answers to, but I'm sure the disciples must have felt super awkward when Jesus got up and started to do it.

Now, the reason that Peter objects so strongly to Jesus washing his feet in verse six is because he recognizes that as their master and teacher, it is completely inappropriate for Jesus to stoop and serve his followers in this slowly manner.

[18 : 33] Peter literally says in verse six, would you, such a one as you are, wash the feet of such a one as I am?

Peter recognizes that Jesus is far greater than him. This was not the job for the master. We're supposed to be struck by Jesus' humility here.

Jesus isn't just doing a weird thing. He's choosing to bend low. Now, just like Jesus' love, sometimes Christians can be prone to over-familiarity with the idea of Jesus having humility. But when we grasp who Jesus is and where he had come from, the heights of glory, then we can better understand how this was a lowly task for him.

Think of the dirt, the sweat, and the dung that Jesus had to come into contact with as he washed their feet. Now, as we point forward to the cross again, this foot-washing scene points to an even greater example of Jesus' humility.

[19 : 50] It is at the cross where Jesus goes as low as it's possible to go to cleanse us from the dirt and dung of sin in our lives.

So, Jesus stepped down from the glory of heaven and to use the words of Philippians chapter 2, Paul describes Jesus' humility really well. Jesus steps down from the glory of heaven.

He made himself nothing by taking the nature of a servant and being made in human likeness. Then he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death.

We see in these verses this sort of double humbling of Jesus. he humbled himself as he stepped down to the earth and took on a human body. Then he humbled himself again as he went willingly to the cross and suffered a cruel and unjust and torturous and deeply humiliating death.

Jesus' death, it wasn't just painful for him. It was deeply shocking and it was completely shameful for him. The whole point of crucifixion was to make an example of the victim.

[21 : 09] Look how terrible they are. Look how shameful a death that they are experiencing. The cross of Christ is a total scandal.

Never was there one so undeserving of that sentence. The creator of the universe was put to death on a cross made of the very wood that he thought up that he designed and created.

As we consider the shame and lowly nature of Jesus' death, let us be filled again with awe, with thankfulness that Jesus chose to tread this path to save us.

So, we thought about the love and the humility of Jesus. But what does Jesus want to teach his disciples in this scene? Well, after a further objection from Peter in verse 8, Jesus says more firmly this time, unless I wash you, you have no part with me.

Unless you accept my washing, you will have no part with me. Unless you accept what I'm doing, you can't join me in my kingdom.

[22 : 31] With the cross looming, this act of foot washing is a picture of the washing of souls that Jesus is soon to offer to all people.

Jesus insisted that he washed everyone's feet in that room. Judas hasn't departed the scene yet. Jesus insists on washing all of their feet, not because the action itself cleansed their souls, it certainly did not.

Jesus washes their feet because it is a clear picture of the soul cleansing that Jesus was about to offer to all people through the cross, even to people like Judas, even to people who would ultimately reject him.

Jesus explains to Peter, unless I wash away your sins, Peter, you have no part with me.

And Jesus speaks the same word to us today. Unless you come to Jesus and accept the soul cleansing that he offers you, then the filth and stains of sin will forever remain in your heart.

[23 : 54] There is nothing else that we can do to make ourselves clean before a holy God. Before a holy God. Only Jesus can offer the soul cleansing that we need from sin.

Because he himself was without sin. He was a perfect, spotless lamb. And he was offered up as a sinless sacrifice.

And his blood was poured out at the cross, purifying sinners from their uncleanness. And this is very sacrificial, ritualistic language.

It pictures the sin cleansing that the Israelites went through in the Old Testament. And if you want to read a bit more about how Jesus fulfills these kind of ritual cleansing requirements, then Hebrews is a really good book to go to.

But without going too much further into that, I want to say that these are the most important claims of the Christian faith. All of humanity has been defiled by sin, but Jesus offers salvation to all people, even to those who continually reject him, and he alone is able to wash us clean and make us acceptable before a holy God.

[25 : 12] These are exclusive claims of Christianity. Jesus asked everyone today, come and accept my offer of cleansing. Come to me and be made clean.

Okay, finally and briefly, in verses 12 to 17, Jesus gives his followers an example to follow.

In verse 12, Jesus puts back on his outer cloak. He returns to his place at the table, and he asks his disciples, do you understand what I've just done for you?

Now, you rightly call me teacher and Lord, for that is who I am. So now, as I, your teacher and your Lord, have washed your feet, then you also ought to do the same for one another.

Now, Jesus isn't expecting all of his followers and for Christians throughout the ages to come to wash each other's feet. Rather, this is a picture of what he was going to do.

[26 : 24] So, Jesus wants us to follow his example of stooping really low and serving others out of love. Do as I have done, he says.

Now, it's like a football coach demonstrating a drill out in the practice field and expecting the players to go about the same drill.

I've just shown you how to do it. now you can do it like me. Or like a master tradesman showing his apprentice how to perform a particular skill. Now that you've seen me do it, now I expect you to do it too.

It's not easy and it will require us to swallow our pride and stoop low, but Jesus says himself in verse 17, there is great blessing when we choose to love and humbly serve one another in this way. Now, we've spent a lot of time this evening reflecting on the amazing love, the amazing humility that Jesus displayed on the cross in order to offer us a full and final deep clean for our souls.

[27 : 41] And we will have a moment very soon to quietly reflect and express our thanks to Jesus in our hearts as we spend time during communion. But I just want to say before we get there, for those here tonight who have not accepted Jesus' offer of cleansing and forgiveness for your sins, he offers you now to come and be clean.

You can see that in these verses. You can pray to him in your heart tonight and ask him to forgive you and clean you and you can say to him, I commit to follow you with my life.

I commit to follow you as my Lord and my master. And we can do that tonight if that is you. See the tremendous love that he has for you. See how low he stooped to save you.

Come to him and be made clean. And for those of us who are followers of Jesus, who have been following him and have been washed by him.

Now the right response to him now after being forgiven, after having our debt of sin erased, after being loved by him so much, the only appropriate response now is to worship him with praise and thankfulness and to do as he says, to swallow our pride and seek ways to serve one another humbly and lovingly.

[29 : 23] Are there ways that you could practically love and serve somebody this week? Maybe there's someone that's been on your mind. Maybe you could check in and pray for someone that you've not seen for a while.

Or maybe you could go towards somebody that you know has been struggling even if you don't know what to say. I'll let you fill in the blanks in your mind.

Who and how can you love this week and humbly and lovingly serve in the same way that Jesus has lovingly and served us?

Let's ask him to help us. Let's pray. Our Lord Jesus, we thank you for this scene in John 13.

We thank you that your life was so clearly set out in the Gospels that we can read it today and see how you love us.

[30 : 38] See how you stooped so low for your disciples in this particular scene but that we can see how at the cross you went so low the creator of the universe and you willingly gave your life up on the cross.

You didn't just suffer pain but you endured the wrath and the punishment of God that we deserve Lord. And we confess Lord Jesus that we have messed up so many times we've sinned, we've rejected you, we've told you we don't want anything to do with you and Lord we are sorry for that but we thank you so much that you have gone to the cross on Good Friday and that you have suffered and died in our place and that you hold out to us today this offer of forgiveness and washing of our sins and that you can make us perfectly clean and perfectly acceptable before a holy God we thank you that you have done that for us Lord I just pray for those here tonight who have not grasped what you have done for us I just pray that you would be speaking to them this evening and that they would know that tonight in their hearts that they can commit their lives to you they can say sorry for what they've done the sins that they have done and that know that you will forgive them and Lord for those of us that have maybe been following you for a while Lord I just pray that you'd help us to grasp your tremendous love and humility to an even greater level than we maybe have before please help us to see you in an even greater light Lord Jesus our Lord and our Saviour and our God and so we pray all these things in your amazing and blessed name Amen