**“HE LOVED THEM TO THE END”**

John 13:1-17

I entitled today’s lesson “He Loved Them To The End,” which is taken from John 13:1. Before we get into the lesson itself I want us to reflect on what Paul said about Jesus in Philippians Chapter 2 (part of which is quoted here).

READ Philippians 2:3-8

It is really a mind-blowing concept when you think about it – the love that God has for us, that Jesus, the very Son of God, the 2nd person in the Trinity, would leave the glory of heaven and the perfect fellowship with His Father and the Holy Spirit, which He had enjoyed for an eternity, and come down here to earth and live among us for 30+ years and do what He did. As we look at the lesson today I want us to keep that thought in the forefront of our minds.

OK, so we have been studying the Book of John and today we come to Ch 13. In the narrative of Jesus’ life here on earth we’re nearing the end. His hour has come to die. As Chapter 13 opens (that’s where we will be this morning) it’s Thursday evening. Later this same night Jesus will be arrested. The next day, Friday, all the events we are familiar with surrounding Jesus’ mock trial and His crucifixion will take place. Between the end of Chapter 12, where we saw Jesus teaching in the Temple for the last time, and the beginning of Chapter 13, where we find Jesus eating the Passover meal with His disciples, several events take place. John doesn’t record these for us, but the other 3 Gospel writers do (Matt 26, Mark 14, Luke 22). Let me summarize what happens between Chapters 12 and 13...

As the Passover draws near Jesus announces to His disciples that in 2 days He will be betrayed and handed over for crucifixion. Meanwhile the Jewish religious leaders plot to arrest Jesus secretly and to kill Him. But they don’t want to arrest Jesus during the feast and stir up the people. We are told in Luke 22:3 that Satan enters Judas Iscariot, one of Jesus’ 12 disciples. He goes to the chief priests and he offers to deliver Jesus over to them. They, of course, are delighted about this and promise to pay Judas 30 pieces of silver if he will do it. Judas begins to look for an opportunity to betray Jesus away from the crowds.

On Thursday morning Jesus sends Peter and John into Jerusalem to prepare for the Passover meal. He gives them instructions – they’ll meet a certain man, he’ll be carrying a jar of water and they’ll say to him, “The Teacher says, ‘My time is at hand. I will keep the Passover at your house with my disciples.’” The man will then direct them to the place where they are to prepare the Passover. It’s going to be in a large upper room in his house, furnished and ready. Well, it all happens exactly as Jesus said and they prepare the Passover meal. In Jesus’ day the people of N Israel, Galilee observed the Passover on Thursday while the people of S Israel, Jerusalem, Judea observed it on Friday. So since Jesus and His disciples are from Galilee they will observe the Passover on Thursday evening.

When Thursday evening comes Jesus is reclining at the table in the upper room and eating the Passover meal with His 12 disciples. While they’re eating a dispute arises among the 12 as to who among them is the greatest. In response Jesus admonishes them for their wrong attitude which prompts Jesus to do what He does in our text this morning.

READ John 13:1-20

**I** 1 Now before the Feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart out of this world to the Father *[Jesus knows the end is very near, that His time here on earth is almost done]*, having loved his own who were in the world *[His disciples, His followers]*, he loved them to the end *[utterly and completely – the kind of love God loves us with, John 3:16]*. 2 During supper *[while they are eating the Passover meal]*, when the devil had already put it into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray him *[we just mentioned this]*, 3 Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands *[aware of the future – His impending death on the cross, resurrection and ascension]*, and that he had come from God and was going back to God *[aware of who He is]*, 4 rose from supper. He laid aside his outer garments, and taking a towel, tied it around his waist. 5 Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel that was wrapped around him *[Jesus here takes on the role of a servant and one by one He begins to wash His disciple’s feet]*.

**I** 6 He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, "Lord, do you wash my feet?" 7 Jesus answered him, "What I am doing you do not understand now, but afterward you will understand." 8 Peter said to him, "You shall never wash my feet." *[a typically impulsive Peter remark]* Jesus answered him, "If I do not wash you, you have no share with me." 9 Simon Peter said to him, "Lord, not my feet only but also my hands and my head!" *[You have to love Peter – he goes from one extreme to another].* 10 Jesus said to him, "The one who has bathed does not need to wash, except for his feet, but is completely clean. And you are clean, but not every one of you."

**I** 11 For he knew who was to betray him; that was why he said, "Not all of you are clean" *[All the other disciples except for Judas are “clean”]*. 12 When he had washed their feet and put on his outer garments and resumed his place, he said to them *[here’s the lesson]*, "Do you understand what I have done to you? 13 You call me Teacher and Lord, and you are right, 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 also should do just as I have done to you.

**I** 16 Truly, truly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. 17 If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them.

Comments? Questions? Let’s unpack these verses.

V 1, Jesus knows that His hour has come. In less than 24 hours He knows that He will die. He’s in the upper room alone with His 12 disciples. He has this one last opportunity to talk to them as a group before He’s arrested, tried and crucified. Let me ask you this question – what is the mindset of Jesus’ disciples on this particular evening? Do they appear to be upset or concerned that Jesus is about to leave them and go away? Not really. They’ve just been arguing about who’s the greatest so they don’t sound too upset to me. The disciples, just like the crowds in John Ch 12, still believe that Jesus is about to set up His kingdom. Even though Jesus has told them on several occasions that He must die and then be resurrected, they still don’t get it. They aren’t thinking that way. They’re thinking kingdom, not cross. Mark describes their mindset this way: “For [Jesus] was teaching His disciples, saying to them, ‘The Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men, and they will kill Him. And when He is killed, after 3 days He will rise.’ But they did not understand the saying, and were afraid to ask Him (Mark 9:31-32). According to John it wouldn’t be until after Jesus’ resurrection that His disciples understood what Jesus had been telling them (Jn 12:16).

But even though the disciples don’t appear to get it or are in some kind of a denial about it, Jesus knows. He knows what’s about to happen and that it’s going to be confusing and traumatic for His disciples. So our Lord, full of love, compassion and concern for this group of men who will be the ones commissioned to carry on His work, spends what remaining time He has with them teaching them. In John Chs 13, 14, 15 and 16 – 4 chapters, 129 verses where Jesus gives to His disciples some parting truths that will serve them well in the years to come. His focus is not on the fact that He’s about to go away. He’s already told them that. Instead Jesus leaves with them His legacy. He gives to them, His 12 disciples, and to all of us who follow Him, promises for the future. Promises that will be theirs after Jesus has gone back to heaven; promises which are ours today! These chapters are filled with some amazing promises from the Lord Himself for those He loves, His own who are in the world.

The disciples had been arguing who among them was the greatest. So Jesus addresses their wrong attitude with an object lesson. Jesus assumes the role of a lowly servant, v 3-5 and He washes His disciples’ feet. John is the only one of the Gospel writers that records this event. The disciples must have been stunned at this act of humility and condescension that their Lord and master should wash their feet when it was supposed to be their job to wash His. But they had been too busy arguing about who was the greatest.

V 6, Peter speaks up and voices what the others must have been thinking – “Lord, do you wash my feet?” In other words, “What are you, the Master, doing washing my feet?” That’s the idea here. So Jesus responds in v 7, “What I am doing you do not understand now, but afterward you will understand.” Jesus is going to explain what He is doing a bit later on.

V 8, Peter makes an impulsive remark, not really thinking before he speaks, “You shall never wash my feet!” When I read this it reminded me of another time Peter impulsively rebuked Jesus, Matt 16:21-23: “Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised. And Peter took [Jesus] aside and began to rebuke him, saying, ‘Far be it from you, Lord! This shall never happen to you.’ But [Jesus] turned and said to Peter, ‘Get behind me, Satan! You are a hindrance to me. For you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man.’” Peter’s thinking was all wrong. And here in our passage again Peter’s thinking is all wrong. But Jesus, rather than rebuke Peter, says, “If I do not wash you, you have no share with me.”

That’s quite a statement. What’s Jesus saying? Well He’s not referring to Peter’s salvation. We’ll see why in a minute. “No share with me” means not having fellowship with Jesus. We all understand the spiritual concept that we’re saved by grace thru faith but that sin hinders our fellowship with Christ. 1 John 1:6-9: “If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin. If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” So our relationship with Christ was established when we professed our faith in Him, but we still must regularly deal with sin by confessing it and turning from it. Peter doesn’t fully understand what Jesus is talking about but he knows that if what Jesus is doing by washing his feet is a good thing then he wants the full treatment – v 9, “not just my feet, but my hands and my head also!”

So Jesus clarifies things. It’s at this point that Jesus explains the spiritual lesson, v 10. “The one who has bathed does not need to wash, except for his feet, but is completely clean.” Walking in sandals on the filthy roads of Israel in the first century made it imperative that feet be washed before a communal meal, especially since people reclined at a low table and feet were very much in evidence. Often a household servant would do this. More often than not you just did it yourself. You didn’t need to take a full bath. You just needed to clean your feet off. So, using Jesus’ analogy here, a bath represents salvation. At the point that we’re saved we are “clean.” We are saved. Titus 3:5-6 says this: “He saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior.” So our salvation, our spiritual bath if you will is this “washing of regeneration” that Titus talks about. John Phillips in his commentary says this: “The blood of Christ provides us with a once-for-all radical cleansing from sin – a complete bath, so to speak. But in our daily walk thru this world we become defiled. So our feet, which come in contact with the world, need to be cleaned. We need, in other words, recurrent cleansing from sin.”

So this is the spiritual point Jesus is making. At the end of v 10 Jesus makes the comment to Peter, “You are clean, but not every one of you.” John then interjects his commentary in v 11 to show that Jesus is speaking about Judas His betrayer. Many theologians will point to this verse as proof that Judas was not saved. If “clean” refers to salvation, the washing of regeneration, then Judas was not clean, was not saved.

When Jesus finishes this object lesson, a lesson in humility, He explains why He did what He did, v 12-17. It wasn’t to implement the ordinance of foot washing. The disciples had argued about who was the greatest. What Jesus did was to show them a basic kingdom principle. The principle of Mark 10:44: “Whoever would be first among you must be slave of all.” Jesus humbled Himself. He laid aside His dignity. He took the lowest place, the place of a servant. He then performed a menial task that none of the others would do. He did all of this to demonstrate His love for them. V 15, “For I have given you an example, that you also should do just as I have done to you.” The application for them and for us is this: We are to love each other and we demonstrate our love by humbling ourselves and serving each other. Believe me the world will take notice of the way we treat each other because that’s not normal. It’s different than the way the world acts. Out there it’s all about ME!

*[examples of servant love for each other]*

When Jesus came to earth the first time, He came not as King and Conqueror, but as the suffering Servant of Isaiah 53. He came to die for the sins of the world. As He revealed in Matthew 20:28, He came “not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.” The humility expressed by His act with towel and basin foreshadows His ultimate act of humility and love on the cross.

Jesus gives us here an example of how to treat each other. We need to follow His example. V 17 “Blessed are you if you do them.” He or she that knows and does their Master's will, is blessed; they are blessed with fellowship with their Lord, and hereafter enter into His joy, with “well done good and faithful servant.”

In John 13:35, which we’ll look at next week Jesus says, “By this all people will know that you are my disciples,” -- here it is: “if you have love for one another.” People won’t notice your words or your accomplishments. But they will notice your love.

Let’s sing: “They Will Know We are Christians by our Love”