

John 13 sermon
Maundy Thursday

Intro – What is love? What does it mean to love someone?

The Beatles sang: “All you need is love”

Burt Bacharach wrote “What the world needs now is love, love, love, it’s the only thing that there’s just too little of”

There are a lot of songs ABOUT love, but I really love these words written by Pink in her song “Love song”:

“I need to hear that you’d die for me, Again and again and again”

I love these words because she doesn’t just talk **about** love – she talks about what love **IS**. “I need to hear that you’d die for me”

Because **love** is about **sacrifice**.

And that’s why God defines love not only by what he says, but by what he DOES.

And John 13 is a great example for us of that sort of love.

The foot washing passage is one that probably makes us cringe a little. Washing feet. Not so nice. Not something we culturally relate to.

In Jesus’ time, people walked in sandals through dusty ground and when they arrived at the house they were visiting, they didn’t need to wash their hands as much as their feet. Their feet were the filthiest part of them. And it was so filthy, that most slaves were not even required to wash feet. Only the lowest of the lowest slaves.

So the fact that Jesus washes feet is **really** surprising. It wasn’t his job. It wasn’t expected. It was a servant’s job. And he was Lord. And what makes it even more amazing is the situation Jesus is in. Let’s think about this for a moment:

These are the last few days before Jesus’ arrest and crucifixion. And he sits down for a meal with his disciples.

And verse 1 tells us that Jesus knows that it is time for him to die. The hour has come. Jesus is coming to the end of his life on earth.

In verse 3, we’re told that Jesus knows that the Father has placed all things under his power. Jesus is still powerful over all things.

And in verse 11 we’re told that he knows that he’s going to be betrayed by Judas.

So Jesus knows all these things. He knows what is ahead for him.

Yet in the middle of this meal, he stands up, took off his outer clothing and wraps a towel around his waist, and proceeds to wash the feet of his disciples. He chose to do the most lowly of things.

And he comes to the apostle Peter ,and Peter is just in shock. “YOU are going to wash MY feet!?” I don’t think so!

Jesus says: “You do not realize now what I am doing, but later you will understand.”

You see, Jesus was preparing for his death. And he was preparing his disciples for his death and what it means. He washes them as a lead up to his crucifixion. He washes them as a sign of what he’s about to do on the cross. He washes them first to remind them that he is about to die a servant’s death. And second, to show them that His death is an act of washing away their sin.

He says to Peter: “Unless I wash you, you have no part with me.”

Jesus says: Unless we are washed BY HIM, we can have no part with him. Unless we allow him to **serve** us in this way, and wash away our sin, we cannot be a part of him.

Peter says: “Then wash my hands and head as well!”

Jesus replies: “If you’ve had a bath, you only need your feet washed. Your body is clean.”

What Jesus is talking about here is our **life** as his disciples.

FIRST, we need Jesus to wash us. To cleanse us. When we put our faith in him, he washes us. He cleans us and takes away all our sin. However, we still need him, every day, to wash us. Because we still sin.

Christians aren’t perfect. Christians still sin each day. When we become a follower of Jesus, and put our faith in Him, he takes away all our sin. But we need to know that Jesus’ death on the cross paid for EVERY one of our sins, EVERY day. His death washes us EVERY day.

III – Wouldn’t it be nice to clean your house once and never have to worry about it again? A clean house lasts about 5 minutes in our home. Mess happens. No matter how hard we try to keep our life clean, it keeps getting messed up.

Living in this world makes us dirty. We are lead into sin. We fall into sin. Whatever we have done in our lives, Jesus’ death has paid the price for our daily sins. His death has dealt with it all, once for all time.

So whatever has come between you and God, whatever you have done, Jesus’ death removes every thing that stand between you and God.

And then, in verse 15, Jesus says:

“I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you.”

Now, surely, Jesus is not saying we should take away each others sins??!!
No.

The example Jesus wants us to follow is the example of ***serving*** and ***sacrifice***.

He is about to show his love by his servant act of sacrifice, on the cross, and what he calls on **us** to do, is to **serve** and **sacrifice**.

So let's talk about how we do that in our lives:

1. The foot washing happens in the middle of a meal.

Sacrifice is not always convenient. It happens in the middle of ordinary things. When we are SEEKING to be sacrificial, when we are LOOKING for ways to put others first, it can be inconvenient for us. In fact, it nearly always is. Otherwise, it's not really sacrifice, is it!

When we show love to people only when it's convenient and easy for us, what sacrifice is there in that? We are called to be servants and to be sacrificial, with our church family, in our marriage, at work, at school, wherever we are – serving by sacrifice means loving people, and that's not always convenient. We need to be prepared to be sacrificial when it is needed, not when it's convenient. Even when it costs us.

2. The second thing is that love comes **first** on Jesus' list of priorities.

His last call on the disciples is not to evangelise, it's not to learn more, it's not to hold lots of church meetings. He's about to die and **the final thing he wants to impress on them** is that he wants them to serve and sacrifice as highest importance.

We want our lives to be marked by the moments of serving and sacrifice. Those times when we've put ourselves aside, and loved others. The times we've given up our own vanity or pride and got down and done the lowest servant things that were necessary. We are not called on to **fit** serving in to our lives. We are called to make it a central part of following Jesus. We go out of our way to find ways to serve and sacrifice.

Love is sacrifice.

This is what Jesus did for us on the cross. This is what we are to do for others.

We must ask ourselves honestly:

Are there people I am not willing to love?

Is there time of my own I am not willing to give up for others?

Are there acts of serving that I am not prepared to do for God and for others?

Are there things that are "beneath" me?

Love is sacrifice.

Nothing was more important to Jesus than going to that cross to die for us. He got down and washed their feet to show that there is NOTHING he is not prepared to do for them to show his love. It was not easy.

It cost Jesus. And it will cost **us** to be servants. It will cost **us** to be sacrificial. It will cost **us** to love people. Genuine love is costly.

Even songwriters like Pink show what they need from love: "I need to know that you'll die for me"

That is not cheap. That is not easy. Getting down on the floor like a servant and washing people's feet is NOT appropriate for the Son of God, the Messiah, the King. But it was necessary. It was necessary to show his love.

13:1 "Jesus knew that the hour had come for him to leave this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end."

He loved them to the end.

And in verse 16 he puts that call on us:

"no servant is greater than his master."

In other words, if it's not beneath Jesus, it's not beneath me. If my master does it, then I can do it. If my master can lower himself as Lord of heaven to wash feet, then I can lower myself to serve.

When the world says "fight", Jesus says **love**.

When the world says "revenge", Jesus says **sacrifice**.

When the world says "that person doesn't deserve it", Jesus says: "Either do you, but I died for you."

Jesus even washed the feet of his betrayer, Judas.

Everyone on this earth needs to experience the love of God – through you. Through your serving. Through your sacrifice.

15I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you.

Serving. Sacrifice.