

RELATED SCRIPTURES

Philippians 2:5-11 | Isaiah 53:1-12 | Psalm 41:9

STUDY FOR SERMON FROM 1.7.24

SUMMARY

Bible scholars refer to John chapters 13-17 as The Upper Room Discourse, the final preparatory dialog Jesus had with his disciples before his descent to the cross. While Jesus primarily directs these words to his disciples in the room, there are numerous applications for Christ-followers of all ages. While partaking in the meal, Jesus rose from supper, laid aside his outer garments, tied a towel to his waist, and then began washing the disciples' feet. As their rabbi, it would have been customary for the disciples to tend to the needs of Jesus; however, the washing of feet was a task reserved for the bondservant. The disciples wouldn't have been expected to wash Jesus' feet, yet Jesus—the teacher—begins washing the feet of the disciples. In this singular act, Jesus signals two meanings: One meaning, as Jesus explains in verse 14, is that it is an action of example. If this menial and extremely lowly task is something that Jesus can do in service of his disciples, they can certainly do it for one another. The followers of Christ are marked by selflessness and sacrifice toward one another; "We love because he first loved us" (1 John 4:19). Despite this selfless action, Jesus states that this cleansing isn't for everyone (v. 18); there was one in his presence who "has lifted his heel against me," fulfilling the prophecy of Psalm 41:9. Nevertheless, Jesus, humility personified, washes even the feet of him who would raise his heel against him. The other meaning Jesus provides for his washing of the disciples' feet is to give theological imagery to what Jesus was just hours away from doing on the cross; foot washing symbolizes Jesus' humbling himself to endure the death of the cross, which would provide the *only* cleansing his disciples would need. This washing is an act only Christ can do, and this one cleansing act would be sufficient for every disciple who believes in his saving work; the washing of feet is a pointer to the ultimate washing of the cross.

GROUP QUESTIONS

Share something that surprises, encourages, or troubles you from the sermon or your direct reading of John 13:1-20.

Why would Jesus have picked the action of washing feet to teach the disciples a lesson about how we are spiritually cleansed? Why doesn't Jesus also acquiesce to Peter's request for his hands and head to be washed?

What are some ways the Lord has called you to "wash the feet" of your family, friends, or neighbors?

If there's one thing Jesus would want you to walk away believing and receiving as a result of this portion of Scripture, what is that thing?

CLOSE IN PRAYER

As you pray, be sure to include today's themes in what you bring before God.