



Background

John 13:1-18

- The context

The Jewish Passover was about to begin. It was less than 24 hours before the execution of Jesus. Even though Jesus had not yet been tried as a false prophet by the Sanhedrin or as an insurrectionist by the Romans, Jesus knew his hour had come. He knew he would be betrayed by one of his own disciples and he knew the identity of that disciple.

- The content

Jesus had loved His disciples. But before His death, He wanted them to see one more demonstration of His love for them. He also wanted to teach them one more lesson about how they should love one another.

- The confidence

Jesus knew who He was. Jesus knew who His Father was. Jesus knew He was with the Father in the beginning and that through Him all things that are created were created. Jesus knew He had been given authority over all things. Jesus knew that all things were held together by Him. Jesus knew He would be raised from the dead and ascend unto heaven.

So after the supper was over.....

John 13:4-17

4 He riseth from supper, and laid aside his garments; and took a towel, and girded himself.

5 After that he poureth water into a bason, and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith he was girded.

6 Then cometh he to Simon Peter: and Peter saith unto him, Lord, dost thou wash my feet?

7 Jesus answered and said unto him, What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter.

8 Peter saith unto him, Thou shalt never wash my feet. Jesus answered him, If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me.

9 Simon Peter saith unto him, Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head.

10 Jesus saith to him, He that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit: and ye are clean, but not all.

11 For he knew who should betray him; therefore said he, Ye are not all clean.

12 So after he had washed their feet, and had taken his garments, and was set down again, he said unto them, Know ye what I have done to you?

13 Ye call me Master and Lord: and ye say well; for so I am.

14 If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another's feet.

15 For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you.

16 Verily, verily, I say unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord; neither he that is sent greater than he that sent him.

17 If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them.

KJV

What can we learn from this story?

- Jesus wanted His followers to know that He loved them.

As the time for His death drew near, Jesus demonstrated His love for them in a way that would produce both shock and awe in His disciples.

The opening verse of John 13 sets the scene for the whole of chapters 13--17.

John 13:1

1 Now before the Feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that His hour had come that He should depart from this world to the Father, having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end.

NKJV

Jesus knew who He was. His disciples would not fully understand who He was until after His resurrection. Then they would reflect on who washed their feet and awed by the love of God.

- Jesus wanted His followers to love one another.

Beginning with this verse in John 13:1 Love is one of the key terms in chapters 13—17.

Love was only used six times in chapters 1--12.

Love occurs thirty-one times in chapters 13-17.

Washing His disciples feet was not only a demonstration of His great love for them but it was the beginning of an extreme intense focus on how they should love one another.

To us foot washing is unusual. But to the Jews this was a very common practical practice. It was like washing our hands. Due to the conditions they lived in with dirt roads and open footwear, foot washing would be done every day in every home perhaps even several times a day.

To the Jews there was no religious significance to someone washing your feet. It was just easier for someone to serve you by doing it for you. When is the last time you washed your feet?

Foot washing was something common for women to do for their husbands, children to do for their parents, and servants to do for a family.

It was always done before a meal, especially since people reclined at a low table and their feet were closer to the face of the person next to them.

Jesus waited till after the meal. I believe He waited because by waiting it would leave a greater impression. Not one of them had volunteered to do for Him or the others what Jesus did for them. Washing feet was the work of a servant. The disciples of Jesus had been fighting for recognition. They had been fighting about who should be second in command under Jesus. Perhaps one of them even entertained the idea for a moment before the meal started since it was a common practice. But then he thought how weak that would that make me look to the others? They were both humbled by His great love for them and humiliated by their failure to love Him.

Peter was visibly shaken. He objected. He expressed what all the others felt. Jesus was doing for him what He should have done for Jesus.

[Jesus uses Peter's objection as an opportunity to reiterate His mission.](#)

He was a King who came to serve. Only those who received His service would have any part in His Kingdom.

So Peter changed his objection into a request for Jesus to wash His whole body.

[Jesus used Peter's request to reiterate His message.](#)

Those who believed in Him were already clean.

The disciples would not understand any of this until after the resurrection.

After dealing with Peter's objection and after washing all of their feet, He taught them the other lesson He wanted them to learn from His example. Yes, He wanted them to know He loved them. But it was just as important to Jesus that His followers loved one another the way He loved them. After being humiliated all of them would have been willing to wash the feet of Jesus. But what about washing each other's feet? What about doing the work of the lowest servant for one another?

Jesus knew that their love for one another would cause the world to know that they were His followers.(John 13:34-35).

34 A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. 35 By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."

NKJV

Their love for one another would establish their credibility as followers of Jesus.

The way the world would see how much they loved Jesus was by how they loved one another.

Jesus had chosen these 12 disciples to be with Him. He intentionally formed a small community. They were the first church before the first church.

He knew that the lessons he taught them about how to love one another would be the foundation for all the Christian communities that followed them.

Being a pastor of a Christian community for all of these years has given me the opportunity to witness countless times through our church members what Jesus did for His disciples. On many of those occasions I have been moved deeply as I watched various members of our church love their brothers and sisters in Christ. No, we do not practice foot washing. It is not one of our ordinances.

But every week I am a witness to our members loving one another by being a lowly servant; without recognition; without being paid. Sometimes they work alone. Sometimes they work with a team. Volunteers like that are the heart and soul of any church and of our mission.

My family has been the beneficiary of this love on many occasions. I also see this love every time I receive my salary from the church for I see every penny I receive as a sacrificial gift of charity from one of our members. To have been supported by charitable gifts this way for over 30 years has been not only a great blessing but a continuous example to me of the love of Jesus. It has enabled me to give most of my time to serve our church by teaching you God's Word and by working with our team that orchestrates the ministries of our church.

I love the church. I love our church. I am proud of our church and how we have loved one another. I am proud of how we have loved our community.

But we have not arrived have we?

I want to be "all in" when it comes to following Jesus.

When I learned that to know Jesus, you needed spend personal time with Him, I was all in.

When I learned that we should use our gifts and talents to glorify Jesus, I was all in.

When I got married and I learned that husbands were to love their wife as Christ loved the church, I was all in.

When I learned that husbands were to wash their wives with the Word, I was all in.

When I learned that our money was the Lord's and we should give generously to His church, I was all in.

When I learned that children were a gift from the Lord, and blessed is the man whose quiver is full of them, I was all in.

When I learned that fathers were to teach their children the Word, I was all in.

When I learned that the best way to disciple men was to be in relationship with them, I was all in.

When I learned that the church was to love one another as He loved us and that his love would define to the world who we are, I was all in.

As a Pastor, over the years, I have laid awake thinking about this for our church, as much as I have laid awake thinking about my children, their spiritual condition, and their future.

How do we love one another?

How do we follow the example of Jesus?

How do we get everyone who comes into our church to be all in?

- [We must all be followers of Jesus\(Matthew 4:19; Matthew 16:24\)](#)

As we learned last week, love is a state of being. It is not an emotion. Love describes God's state of being. (1 John 4:8). It explains why God did what He did. (John 3:16). To love one another as Jesus loved you, love must be your state of being. Only followers of Jesus share His state of being. God is love and for followers of Jesus, love is who you are. (2 Peter 1:4).

Only those who are followers of Jesus and share His state of being will follow this command.

- [We must all become faithful to a small community of followers\(Acts 2:46; I Cor. 14\)](#)

Jesus loved all of His followers but He did not wash all His follower's feet. He washed the feet of the 12. They were His small community within His larger community of followers. We know that Jesus had at least 70 followers at one point in His ministry and there were 120 at Pentecost 50 days after His resurrection. Why didn't Jesus wash all of their feet? Why only the 12?

We can love all believers in our heart. But practically we can't love every follower of Jesus the same way. To follow the example of Jesus, we have to join a small community of believers within the larger community.

We cannot follow the example of Jesus and fulfill the command to love one another to a community of strangers.

Jesus knew His small community by name.

Andrew, Bartholomew, James the son of Alphaeus, James, John, Judas Iscariot, Matthew, Peter, Philip, Simon, Thaddaeus, and Thomas.

To follow the example of Jesus in the way we love one another we must become faithful to a small community of followers.

- We must all depend upon our small community of followers.(1 Cor. 12)

The church is not like an individual sport like boxing, wrestling, tennis, ping pong, golf, or swimming, where all you need is a good coach to be successful.

Church is like a team sport like basketball, football, baseball, or soccer in which every team member needs other team members in order to fulfill our mission to love one another.

Within our small community of followers we all have a role to fulfill. If we do not fulfill that role the other members suffer.

It is in that kind of team environment that world will see that we are followers of Jesus and become followers of Jesus. It is within that kind of team environment that new followers will mature as followers of Jesus.

- We must all be willing to reproduce our small communities.(2 Timothy 2:2)

To keep the communities small we must reproduce them. The 12 stayed together for a season and then they branched. The kingdom of Jesus will not grow if we just stay in one small group that we enjoy. We need new leaders to grow up and reproduce new small groups.

- We must all be filled with the Spirit of Jesus.(Eph. 5:18)

When we follow Jesus we share His state of being. To walk in His love for one another we must be filled with the love of Jesus.

God is love. He is in followers of Jesus. The love of God in us can grow cold. The Spirit of the Lord is like fuel to the fire of love in us. We need to be renewed with that fuel at least daily through out times alone with the Lord and then through our relationships with other followers.

There was something missing in these disciples that was going to change. They were not all in! They thought they were but they were not.

Are you?

We have to overcome a perception of the church in the world that has done so much damage to the cause of Jesus. The world does not see that we love one another. Their perception of us has been formed by...

1. Church wars.

2. Turnover in leadership.

Pastors leave their congregations after very short terms. Some leave for greener pastures. Some are fired. Most just quit.

3. Turnover in membership.

Church members leave their churches. Most leave for greener pastures. Some leave because they don't like the direction of the church. Some leave because they get offended. Some leave because they stop following Jesus.

All of this turn over sends this message to unbelievers. Church is just a service you attend. Church is just a place you go. People who are unchurched don't see that our relationships with one another in the church are important and that we love one another.

And they don't even know the half of it. They know that we leave our church but they don't know how most leave. Can you imagine having a family member who has been living with you suddenly just disappear without saying anything and no one knows they are missing until after about a month? Isn't that the norm in the church? Doesn't that reveal that our relationship with our church has not been very important? The world does not even treat one another that way.

Have you ever looked around on a Sunday morning and wondered what happen to Joe or Becky or Sam or Kathy?

Then we practice this habit of shooting our wounded.

Jesus said that all will know that we are His disciples if we have love for one another. That should be a capital IF. Our failure to be examples of His love to one another explains the current attitude of the world toward the church of Jesus Christ. It also explains the great falling away of so many children who were raised in church.

This is not going to change until we are all in as followers of Jesus.

Are you all in?