

We are working through John's gospel and we come today to the turning point. I have only ever had my feet washed once and it was a strange experience. I was quite young and I felt a bit uncomfortable. Looking back I suppose that's how you're meant to feel. It is an intimate thing washing and drying between someone else's toes. And feet are an odd, unglamorous, often smelly thing. They are basic, down to earth.

All of that comes through in this passage. It is the beginning and the end. The beginning of the long build-up to Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection, and the end of everything Jesus had done so far. And then we have the strange line: (Verse 1) *Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end.*

Again, John tells a brilliant story. In three verses he fills in the background and helps us see what the foot washing means and also what Jesus' death and resurrection mean.

First: Passover. We know that when John mentions a festival he wants us to apply the meaning to Jesus. In 1:29,36 he shows Jesus as the Passover Lamb. In 2:19-21 he speaks at Passover of the Temple being destroyed and rebuilt – speaking of his own body. In ch 6 he fed the crowd at Passover and spoke of them feeding on his body and blood. Now he is back for one final Passover and John explains the meal and how it pointed to the events of the following day when Jesus was crucified.

Second: Jesus time had come. This is a Kairos moment – a moment when everything changes. It is not simply the time for Jesus to die, although it is partly that. Neither did Jesus die and go to heaven. After his death Jesus is first raised to new life, then meets the disciples, and only then goes to the Father. This is what gives meaning to the footwashing and the crucifixion. They form a ladder from this world to the Father's world. They are the acted words the ETERNAL WORD must speak and the way home the Son of God must take.

Third: What is now done is an act of supreme love. Back in ch 10 he is the Good Shepherd who lays down his life for the sheep – now he loves them to the end. He loved them to the uttermost and there was nothing that love could do that he did not now do. I talk about them: he loved them, he washed their feet etc. But this is also about you he loved you to the end and there is nothing that love could do that he has not and would not do for you. Whether you recognise it or not.

All of that is verse 1. In 2 and 3 we see Judas allowing the Devil's whispered suggestion to gain a foothold. We'll come back to that but see how evil creeps in at the very moment when love is going to the limit. It is not cosy or romantic – it is love betrayed and love portrayed.

Then in v3 we see the full picture. The Word who was with God, the Word who was God, became flesh. He laid aside the clothes of glory and put on human nature, in order to wash feet. He came from God and was going back to God and the foot washing was Jesus was of showing who God was and is. The next time Jesus has his clothes changed it is to reveal him

as the man, the king (19:5). After that he is naked on the cross, revealing the Father's heart as he gives his life for the world.

Peter, yet again, gets it wrong. Jesus must wash us if we are to belong to him. There is an old-fashioned saying that we don't really use much now – 'washed in the blood of the Lamb' – what it means is that we are able to come to God in faith because Jesus shed his own blood for us. In that sense he washes us clean or makes us righteous. That happens when we decide to follow him, so, what we need day by day is the regular washing of those parts of ourselves, our personalities and bodies that get dusty and dirty.

1. *Have you been to Jesus for the cleansing pow'r?  
Are you washed in the blood of the Lamb?  
Are you fully trusting in His grace this hour?  
Are you washed in the blood of the Lamb?*
  - *Refrain:  
Are you washed in the blood,  
In the soul-cleansing blood of the Lamb?  
Are your garments spotless? Are they white as snow?  
Are you washed in the blood of the Lamb?*
2. *Are you walking daily by the Savior's side?  
Are you washed in the blood of the Lamb?  
Do you rest each moment in the Crucified?  
Are you washed in the blood of the Lamb?*
3. *When the Bridegroom cometh will your robes be white?  
Are you washed in the blood of the Lamb?  
Will your soul be ready for the mansions bright,  
And be washed in the blood of the Lamb?*
4. *Lay aside the garments that are stained with sin,  
And be washed in the blood of the Lamb;  
There's a fountain flowing for the soul unclean,  
Oh, be washed in the blood of the Lamb!*

In verse 15 Jesus gives his followers a pattern to copy. Having washed their feet he says they should do the same – it is about serving. We are to look away from ourselves and at the world we are supposed to be serving. Where the world's needs and our vocation meet is where we're supposed to be, ready to take on insignificant roles if that's what God wants, or to be publicly visible if that's what he wants. The picture of foot washing serves as a picture of all the menial things we may be called to do but it also points to the challenge to follow Jesus all the way, to lay down life itself.

The last section puts two disciples side by side. John and Judas. John was young, perhaps not even twenty and he had spent so much time with Jesus. Their relationship was so close that he could ask the question everyone else held back from. He was close enough to be able to lean back and ask Jesus and in the midst of the noise of a family meal hear the answer. It is one of the great pictures of friendship in the bible. And it is side by side with one of the greatest pictures of betrayal.

Ancient paintings make it obvious by expression, clothing and body language that Judas is the traitor but the others didn't know. Jesus had washed his feet too. Even when Jesus spoke to him, the others didn't understand what was going on. Dipping bread in the dish was a sign of friendship and so giving that to Judas not only answered the question it was a sign of the depth of betrayal that would take place. I don't think Judas became demon possessed here. The word used for satan is accuser and it is a legal term for someone who brings a prosecution or charge against someone else. What we witness is Judas being used to bring a charge against Jesus. The confrontation between light and darkness that has been hanging over the story since chapter one is coming to a climax and Judas has been willingly enlisted into the forces of darkness. John's master touch as a story teller is seen in vs 30 *Judas took the piece of bread and went out. It was already night.*

In the middle of the picture we have Jesus, flanked by love and betrayal. Perhaps that's what it's always like – even for us. If so, there is comfort in knowing that Jesus was troubled in spirit. There's no shame in that. It's what happens when you're a foot washer, a generous love person, open to deep friendship and to the kind of wounds that only friends can give. But John in describing the entry of satan into Judas knows that, even then, God's purposes are being worked out.

The light will go on shining in the darkness, and the darkness will not overcome it.