

22. John 13:1-17

Getting started

How would you feel about your growth group leader, or a member of staff, getting down on their knees and washing your feet?

Setting the scene

We are starting our look at the second half of John's gospel. Jesus has entered the area around Jerusalem for the last time. He has made his triumphal entry into Jerusalem. He has done this despite the plot to kill him, and his knowledge that his time was about to come. The second half of John's gospel (chapters 12-21) deals with the last week in Jesus' life. It must be important for John to take up so much of his gospel with the events of this week.

Observation

1. What was the purpose of the Passover Feast? What did it involve?
2. How has John prepared us for this? *[See John 1:29 and 36]*
3. Do you find anything funny in this scene? If you do, how does the writer use humour here? What effect is he seeking?
4. How did Jesus know that someone was going to betray him?
5. Who are the 'master' and the 'one who sent him' in verse 16? What point is Jesus making?

Interpretation

1. What does John's mention of the Passover add to the story, besides an historical detail? *[It is an anticipation of Jesus' own climatic Passover as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world, and purchases all believers out of their slavery to sin.]*
2. How do you understand the responsibility of Judas for betraying Jesus, given that Judas was prompted by the devil?

3. What role was Jesus playing when he washed his disciples' feet? [*a slave*] What does this show of the character of Jesus?
4. What does Jesus mean when he says to Peter (verse 8), 'Unless I wash you, you have no part in me'?
5. How does the foot washing anticipate Jesus' sacrificial death for them?
6. What conclusion does Jesus draw from washing their feet? [*verses 14-17*]
7. Is Jesus just an example for us, or does he do something we cannot do for ourselves?

Implications

1. How does verse 3 prepare you for what is to come in this passage and at the Cross?
2. Are you embarrassed when other Christians serve you? What does embarrassment say about us, and is there a better response?
3. Should we wash the feet of each other? [*Views differ on this. Some see it as a good way of remembering Jesus' radical humble service. Others see it as a parody or a mere rite that can mask an unbroken spirit and a haughty heart.*]
4. What does this passage mean for the way we serve at church and what we expect of our church leaders?
5. How does this story help you in your evangelism?
6. How are you personally challenged by Jesus' command to do as he has done?

Prayer suggestions

1. Thanks for the humble example Jesus' sets for us.
2. Ask that we will not think that Jesus is too good for us and we could never be like him.
3. Ask that the world/people known to us will see Jesus as the one who came to serve, and will be prepared to be served by him.