

Reading: John 13:1-17

Theme: Introduction to the marvellous action.

We may have been appalled by insider trading as it has broken on the news through the years - most recently in February as a member of a Senate Intelligence Committee and his wife sold large amount of stocks and shares from the information he had been privy to. They have been caught and are now under investigation! Back in February 2019 Leeds United were accused of spying on Derby County training sessions (*Leeds won the game 2-0*). A number of other “spying” missions were then reported about a number of football clubs. In both those situations it was using inside knowledge and information to one’s own benefit. Yet using inside knowledge and information was not wrong in WWII as intelligence gathering, especially at Bletchley Park through decoding Nazi messages with a captured Enigma machine and an early computer. Such knowledge was used for the benefit of others by shortening the war considerably and saving innumerable lives.

Last time we looked at the passage we read, we saw The Marvellous Love of the Lord Jesus and His love was coupled with knowledge - knowing who He was, knowing His hour had come, knowing the disciples with all their faults, we also saw it was a distinctive love, as He loved His own who are in the world and we noted it was a continuing love for it continued right to the end of His earthly life and He loves us even now in our lives and will for eternity if we are Christians. This morning we will start looking at **The Marvellous Action** (v2-11). This event of Jesus washing the feet of His disciples is a wonderful, a marvellous event. It will challenge us and teach us much. As John wrote of it, he did not jump straight in, but gives us some comments to light up the marvellous action with an intensity of significance that we could easily skip over, miss completely or not even consider. So, in a sense, v2-3 is the introduction to the marvellous action. The first

verse is the introduction to the whole of chapters 13-17, but here v2-3 are the **introduction to the marvellous action of the foot washing** of the disciples by the Lord Jesus. These two verses teach us at least 3 things:

1. The Timing Clarified. (v2a)

John is quite specific about the timing of this event. NIV says “*The evening meal was being served*” or “*was in progress*” [1984 or 2011 versions]. AV says “*And supper being ended*”. What is going on? One indicates it is at the start of the meal and the other at the end! This is a point of grammar as the Greek word can mean “*had been served*” i.e. ended or “*being served*”. The same word and tense is found in Matthew 27:1 and AV says “*When the morning was come*”. So here in John 13:2 it does mean “*evening meal was come*” - especially as we consider they were still eating in v26. Also, foot washing would be done before a meal, not during or after it!

Let’s look at the timing of events that evening - supper, the evening meal is ready, food is being served, placed on the table. All the disciples were there, but there is grit and dust on their sandaled feet. Dinner is almost there and waiting. It’s not a case of wash your hands and sing happy birthday as you do so, but their feet needed washing and the question was who was going to do it! Probably they thought that if no one did it, they would eat with their feet still unwashed - possibly as they normally did!

The meal they were going to eat was the Passover Supper, where they would all be reminded of God’s love, mercy and goodness to Israel many centuries before as God powerfully brought them out from Egypt, rescuing the nation from slavery and bondage. When we as a church meet again together physically in Christ’s Name in the church building for a service, I wonder what thoughts will fill

our minds and hearts? Would we have distractions - the state of the building or the temperature, or how people have changed or need a haircut or shave? That Passover night, the disciples were concerned about the meal, its arrangements and getting it ready, but they were not ready, not prepared to remember God and what He had done for them as a people. In fact, they were proud and not one of them would humble themselves to wash the feet of the other disciples - as we will see next time.

It is all too easy for us to come to a service, any service, without the right attitude, right frame of heart and mind. We are not to come with prejudices, biases, with a ready criticism. If we do so, we have to ask ourselves is it worth us coming? If we come in that way, we will put nothing into a meeting and are likely to get little or nothing out of it; maybe even spoil and affect it adversely for other people. To come with that attitude is to come with an attitude of pride - we know better, we don't care, we want for self, we stand or sit and condemn! Others may come cold-hearted, be overtired due to a late night, or come with minds full of this or that. Perhaps we need to remember we are coming to meet together as God's people in His name, to worship Him and we need to be able to give wholehearted concentration as we take part in this great privilege and honour of meeting together with God's people - to remember together our Lord Jesus and worship Him. This is how and why we are come to church, to join again physically with God's people sometime in the future, but also virtually now online and we join and identify with the people of God in a local church, to be part of them and join in the mutual fellowship of praising our same Lord and Saviour as well as learning of Him.

We are to come prepared to meet with our God alongside and with our brothers and sisters in Christ. If we do not, then we are

dismissing a large chunk of the God-given purpose of meeting together as the local body of Christ in our church as the meal of God's word is ready to be served, we too could be listening with proud hearts and spiritually dirty feet! Now see:

2. The Traitor Identified.(v2b)

This is bit of a shock; you may also be shocked that I do not plan to say a lot about Judas. Note he was among the disciples and the devil had put into, prompted, cast into Judas' heart the notion that betraying Jesus was right and proper. Here is the source of Judas' sin. He was the willing victim of the devil, the devil's malice against God and Christ. Judas was going to betray his master and do so relatively cheaply. It was of satanic origin. The motive for Judas was greed and gain; for Satan it was to destroy Jesus. The outcome was that both Satan and Judas were themselves ruined! It is shocking there was a traitor in the inner band of Jesus' disciples. Also shocking that Jesus washed Judas' feet! It is as if Jesus is saying "*Think again what you are doing, consider it well. Here is another chance to turn and repent!*" Sadly, Judas deliberately went on in his sin and betrayal of the Lord Jesus.

It is so important to note Judas - for in huge letters he warns us that we can have great privileges, know loads of and about Jesus, Christianity and yet we could still be lost! Judas screams at us to examine ourselves and not to be content with religion, having done great things, knowing many things of the Lord Jesus. We are to realise that we can deludedly go from an upper room experience to darkest Hell! Please, please learn from and be warned by Judas, whether young or old. We are to make sure we have trusted the Lord Jesus as our own Saviour and not to be found a traitor even with all our privileges.

3. The Truth Magnified. (v3)

We can do or say things, yet at the time not fully realise what we have done or said - whether good or bad, wise or foolish actions or words. Yet the action of Jesus washing the feet of His disciples is done in complete awareness, with insider knowledge of who He was, where He was going and what He would accomplish. We could start v3 *“Because Jesus knew... He got up from the meal...”* The foot washing happened even though Jesus had a full knowledge of who He was, what He had given to Him, where He had come from, to where He was going. Jesus had full knowledge of His Father’s will for Him.

He also knew He had power over all things! God the Father had put all things under His power, all things into His hands (AV). Jesus as God the Son, even in a human body, still had His total power as God the Son. He showed this so clearly in His life - walking on water, creating and multiplying fish and bread, transforming water into wine, controlling the wind and the waves, overcoming death, disease and demons by His word or touch. He had, even in His time of humiliation, all power at His disposal and He knew it!

At the start of his gospel John delights to tell us that Jesus came from God, was fully and truly God (1:1ff). He was the Word made flesh, the One who created all things, who’d been there in eternity before time began with God, as God, co-equal with and of the same substance as God. He was not a demigod, a lesser being, but all that makes God, God was Jesus’ also! The plan of salvation set in place in eternity before time began, involved Jesus leaving the glory and splendour of heaven, the Son of God confined His being to a single cell, an embryo, a baby, toddler, youth and. We sing the truth at Christmas *“Veiled in flesh the Godhead see; hail incarnate Deity. Pleased as man with man to dwell”*. Jesus had come from heaven’s glory; still had heaven’s adoration as He had

come into this world. He knew He had come from God the Father, was sent by Him and was returning to Him.

How would we feel knowing we had power, all power, knowing we came from God and the devil was trying to use one of our close associates to destroy us? Would we want a flashy and immediate confrontation? Maybe to devastate Judas and the devil by one unstoppable blast of divine wrath and power? That would have been so easy for Jesus to do! Zap and all opposition on earth and in the spiritual realms would have been annihilated and gone!

Yet Jesus does not do that, but He strips off down to His undergarment, His vest and pants in our thinking, He stoops down and then this One who knew His power, His origins, the Lord of glory in our humanity, He knelt down and washed the dirty feet of proud, stubborn men. Men who were sinners, who would desert Him, deny Him and He would even wash the feet of the one who would betray Him!

Jesus knew He was returning to God the Father - not only knowing that, He also knew He would return to the Father and have the glory He had before He left heaven. Jesus knew that He would have, to our minds, unimaginable glory again. He would be given a name above every other name; He would be hyper-exalted. Yet knowing His past glory, His present power, His future glory, He nevertheless knelt down and washed His disciples' feet!

In the full light and understanding of all this, all His self-knowledge, He still knelt down. Maybe we would say something like *“Don't you know who I am, where I have come from, what I am doing here, what dignity and honour I will have in a little while? You should serve Me, you should bow down and be My servant!”* Yet this was not the case with the Lord Jesus even

though He knew all this; He got up, took off His outer clothing and actually washed His disciples' dirty feet!

How could Jesus do such a thing knowing all He did? He could do so, because He knew why He had come into the world, knew the power that was needed to accomplish such. He knew how He was going back to the Father and that this centred on the cross and the death He would suffer the following day.

The Lord Jesus came from God not merely to sort out our problems, to make us happy, to make life and death bearable, to sort out our marriage problems or finances or our children or our parents or our health concerns. Jesus came as the Saviour to rescue you and me from our sin and its consequences. His name "Jesus" basically means "Saviour". That is why He came from God and He came to go to the cross, to die and suffer in my place and your place. Yet there on the cross it wasn't only the experience of physical death He went through, but also spiritual suffering as there He had our sin upon Him, our filth, our nice vices, our unspeakable vices, our swear words, wrong thoughts, deeds and words. He took our punishment in our place -He took our hell there.

Jesus needed the power of God to sustain Him. He seems so calm and cool at the start of this evening, but only a few hours later He was in an agony of body, mind and spirit, as the horrors of His imminent death swept over Him like many crashing, roaring waves. As we see both these things, understand that both were necessary to show us something of the horror of what He would go through and the calm resolve with which He would go through it to become our Saviour and the Mediator of the new covenant.

The way for Him being glorified again and returning to God, was through the cross, through obedience to the will of His Father and for the joy that was set before Him, He endured the cross, despising the shame. Part of His suffering and humbling Himself was that He became as a man, as a servant and so to wash His disciples' feet was an act of true humility and true love. He loved mankind, these disciples and also us so much that He was willing to wash feet as part of loving, teaching and saving us. Yet He would humble Himself even more in all He went through the next day...

With Him there was no pride, no standoffishness, no *“Keep your distance”* attitude as He stood on His dignity. He had a willingness to love, serve and save His people. We will see that we are to learn of Him – as v12-17 tells us - as we have a wonderful obligation put on us. Paul reinforces this by saying *“Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus...”* (Philippians 2:5 AV)

Are we ready to learn, love and serve our God as we humbly love and serve each other?