

Reading: John 13:1-17

Theme: The kind instruction by the Lord Jesus.

Last time we saw that even though the disciples were too proud to wash feet, the Lord Jesus did so. By doing such, He taught them much – **1stly: an active rebuke** to their pride and we also saw **2ndly: Peter’s stubborn extremes**. I have one main point before we leave our looking at this Marvellous Action by the Lord Jesus. We will now consider **3rdly. The Kind Instruction**.

We have much to thank Peter for here! If he had not been obstinate, objectionable, argumentative, basically downright pig-headed, we would miss so much recorded for us here - would have missed the kind and gentle reply of the Lord Jesus. I know that if something is bothering or troubling me, or is on my mind then I can be short tempered, irritable and snappy. Maybe you are the same, maybe even not need something to be bothering us in this lockdown, isolation time at the moment, as it is getting to you!

Remarkably we see nothing like this with the Lord Jesus – He remains loving, kind, patient as He teaches Peter and the others. Jesus spoke like this even though He knew perfectly clearly all He was facing – His imminent death and suffering. See 4 areas of kind instruction Jesus gives:

1. Understanding

In v6 Peter asked Jesus if He’s going to wash his feet! Then in v7 Jesus tells Peter that he doesn’t understand at that time what He was doing, but he would understand later. Jesus does not say that it was obvious what He was going to do! Jesus wanted Peter and the others to think of more than the actual act of foot washing as He did not want this to remain just an extraordinary act of love and kindness alone. Yes, this foot washing was an act of humility, but it was just a partial, though great act of humility for the

physical comfort of the disciples. Jesus knew that within the next 24 hours He was going to absolutely humble Himself by going to the cross and voluntarily dying to save them - He would humble Himself to even death on the tree. If Peter objected to foot washing, what would he do and say about Jesus dying to save him?

Peter was gently shown that he would later understand what Christ did. The word 'later' is literally "*after these things*" (μετα ταυτα). There would come a time when Peter would make sense of what Jesus was doing. In v7 Jesus uses 2 different words for "know" - the first (ειδω) = to see, to know, to realise (as NIV). The word is linked to observation and learning. The 2nd word (γινωσκω) = to know intimately, to understand (as NIV). Jesus says to Peter that now at that moment he couldn't make sense, didn't realise what He was doing, but that he would understand personally after these things.

What things did Jesus mean? Some say after Jesus' explanation and the marvellous obligation it left them. Yes, they are right, but it goes further. Some say that the words "after these things" refers to heaven. Well yes, Peter, as we all, will understand perfectly then, so Jesus is unlikely to be referring to that here. The Lord Jesus will go on to speak a little later of the work and help of the person of the Holy Spirit (16:12-14) and the safest, probably the best understanding of these words here is to say that after Jesus' sufferings, death, resurrection and ascension, when the Holy Spirit has been poured out in all His fullness on the day of Pentecost, then Peter and the other disciples would see the full significance, understand what Jesus did there in the upper room - in the full light and context of His entire humiliation and work.

This time with the Covid-19 pandemic, as well as with many other things, events and times we may well feel "*No Lord, I do not want*

this to happen... I do not understand...” It could be something affecting our loved ones, contentment, church, health, happiness and we do not want such. In such times we are to realise that we do not fully understand God’s mysterious and loving will, providence or purpose in our lives or the lives of those around us. Most often we are like moles or worms, living our lives mostly in the dark and we fail to see the purposes our God and Saviour sees most clearly from beginning to end. Most often we see the here-and-now impact of events in and upon our lives. Our God knows the overall plan - beginning to end, and works all things together for good to those who love Him, who are called according to His purpose. It is not chance or random acts. Just because we don’t understand, are confused or don’t realise or understand the whys and wherefores, it does not mean it shouldn’t happen or are wrong!

We are to be assured we will know and understand. Then one day we will bless and praise the Lord our God for such. Perhaps as time passes and the ways of God become more clearly understood, we will do that - it is more clearly understood, not often fully understood because our God has bigger purposes and plans than we could imagine or grasp. As His purposes ripen, will we see of Him and His purposes in an event which confused us long ago.

We can rest assured that if we are confused, hurting, grieving believer at this time, even if God’s ways with us seems so confusing, then one day we will understand even if we do not know now! Yet those kind words and thoughts from the Lord Jesus may not be enough to silence our fears or anxiety in our lives. They were not for Peter, so the Lord Jesus continues His kind instruction and so we see:

2. Belonging.

Peter reacts strongly, but Jesus continues His kind instruction to point Peter to the importance of belonging to Him which this washing of feet pointed to. Jesus basically says “*Look Peter, my entire life is one of humiliation, of which foot washing is only a part. You will not belong to me unless I wash you.*” At this point Jesus seems to speak on one level, but in fact He is referring to things on a higher level. It is ludicrous to assume that by washing a person’s feet they would be saved, become a Christian and have a part with Jesus! To have a part with someone was a Jewish phrase and way of saying “*belonging to*” or “*having an inheritance or share with*”. It is obvious it refers to more than the act of foot washing – as Judas also had his feet washed!

Here it is thought Jesus is referring to washing away Peter’s sin by His blood. That sounds a bit gruesome - washed clean in blood! As Christians we use that phrase, but by it we do not mean being literally washed by Christ’s actual blood, as it is a way used to describe the cleaning effect of all that Jesus’ life and especially His death accomplished on our behalf. The phrase “*washed in the blood of the Lamb*” is used in Revelation 5:1 (AV) and in 7:14 “*These are they who have come out of the great tribulation; they have **washed** their robes and made them white **in the blood of the Lamb.***” This is not done literally, but is a figurative, pictorial way of showing the purifying cleansing effect of all Jesus is and has accomplished for all who believe in Him.

To belong to Christ, have a part in Him, we need to be washed from our sin - our wrong words, deeds and thoughts and to have all their guilt removed. Over 40 years of playing rugby, I played rugby in some awful conditions - thick mud and you couldn’t recognise one player from another. At such times, at the end of the game, we went into the changing rooms and didn’t bother stripping off, but just walked into the showers to get rid of as much

as the mud as possible and the kit still needed a good wash to make it truly clean!

We may think that we are good nice people, but the Bible says that even our righteousnesses are filthy and disgusting, far worse than mud or excreta in God's sight! If that is the case, how bad is our sin then? Yet many people say they will be ok, as if a quick shower of churchgoing, religion and nice moral doing will make them fine and acceptable to God. If you are like that, I have to say, sorry it will not do. You need to have your soul thoroughly cleaned and washed by the blood of the Lord Jesus i.e. you need to trust Him personally as your own Saviour, so all that He accomplished in His life, death and resurrection will be credited to your life. Then and only then when you have been washed in the blood of the Lamb, will you have a part in Him and belong to Him. Only then will you have eternal life and a home in heaven.

Do you know such in your life? You can do. You can know that you are washed clean the moment you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ as your own Saviour - owning you have done sin, wrong against God as well as people; your sins may be so many that you cannot remember them all, but you do not need to remember them all because God knows them and when you own you are guilty and want to leave and lose such, that you want to live for God and you ask the Lord Jesus to save you. This means and involves not just a notion of God and Jesus, but personal faith and trust in Jesus as your own Saviour to save you from the hell you deserve and all because He died in your place. "Wash" may seem a simple term, but points us to this higher idea and truth of the need to be clean from our sin, it's guilt, offence to God and the judgement it deserves from God.

Peter understood something and it affected him. Then he wanted to be washed all over - unbounded exuberance! Jesus gave further kind instruction on:

3. Cleansing.

Peter saw it as something physical and so wanted his head, hands and feet washed as well. Jesus goes on to show, by a physical truth, an even higher spiritual truth. If you've had a bath, then walk about barefoot, even for a short time, you will usually need to wash your feet again. Simple, straightforward and sensible advice and practice to be clean, completely clean again.

Spiritually, when we are washed clean in the blood of the Lamb it is as if we are bathed and completely, totally clean. We use the word "justified" - just if I'd never sinned, or better, just if I'd always been as pure as the Lord Jesus. This is our legal standing before God, not only at the instant of our conversion, but forever! We are to realise we are given, credited, imputed Jesus' perfect righteousness - for all time and eternity and it is ours forever!

Regrettably we live in a mucky, dirty, sinful world. Often our thoughts, words, practices do not correspond to our God declared and God made legal position in Christ. We are legally and eternally clean, but that does not remove or isolate us from real life, from contact and pollution with sin in our lives. This means there needs to be a constant daily washing, cleansing of our lives - not to be re-justified or saved again, but to maintain a clean life. There is a need to maintain a consistent clean life on a daily basis. It is so important to do this, else our relationship with our Saviour is spoiled, marred and not fully enjoyed. This is what the apostle John writes of in 1 John 1:9 *"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness."* This was written to believers who'd been

caused to have doubts about their lives as believers. The confession is not to salvation primarily, but to restoration in our relationship with Christ.

We should become more and more aware of this need as we grow in the Christian life, as we become more sensitive to sin and its pollution. It is a process we will appear to have more use of as an older Christian than a younger Christian, as we become more and more aware of sin and its defilement. What may not have bothered us as a young Christian, may well grieve us as an older Christian. It is important for young Christians of any age, to develop holy lives, thoughts and discipline in order that such things become part of their characters and they can live and build their lives on a good foundation.

This is not a case of being re-saved, it is a case of an ongoing process of cleansing – we call it sanctification. In the Lord's prayer we pray "*Forgive us this day... Lead us not into temptation, but...*" We need this cleansing continually from the sins of daily dirt and sins. The world, our own flesh and the devil would tempt us, lure us, drive us into sin, but the blood of Jesus Christ keeps on cleansing us from all sin. We can go to Him and have a renewed sense of pardon and forgiveness. We are not to treat it as a light thing, but solemn, serious and our repentance is to be meant. There is to be a regular cleansing, washing of the defilement from sin for our comfort, joy and awareness of our Saviour's love, help and company.

The Lord Jesus doesn't end His kind instructions there, but lovingly, kindly, gently adds one more thing - although not for Peter's sake and so we see:

4. Sorrow.

Jesus had already said they were not all clean; for Jesus knew who it was that was even then planning to betray Him. I feel Jesus said this with sorrow, as a final overture to win Judas to Himself. Jesus speaks on this later most clearly, but here He lovingly sounds a note of warning and does so with sorrow as He kindly instructs Peter and the disciples. Yet Judas did not listen, did not pay any attention even as His feet had been or were going to be washed!

Not all were clean - words of sorrow from such a loving Saviour! What would He say of us listening at this time? As pastor here I know where most of the regular attenders stand with the Lord Jesus; some I am uncertain about and fear they are still unclean. Those of you who are listening in, unseen and unknown to me and the church here, I do not know where you are regarding Christ. But whoever you are that are listening, can I urge you to be warned by Judas, one who was a close “follower” of Jesus, a disciple, a miracle worker, a member of the inner circle of Christ’s followers and yet he was not clean! It should cause us all to fear, to shudder just in case we are deluding ourselves and we are not clean and therefore lost.

I urge us all to examine our hearts, lives and experience. Have we ever truly prayed to the Lord Jesus and asked Him to wash us, make us clean from our sin? If we haven’t, then He has sorrow over you at this time and perhaps a sorrowful declaration stands over your life “*not clean*” and you need to realise that “*not clean*” means condemned! I’ve explained the way to be clean, I’d willingly take time and explain it again if you make contact with me, I urge you to make sure you are clean.

I pray we all will go on keeping on learning from this Marvellous Action, especially as we consider next time the Marvellous Obligation it lays on us.