

## JESUS LOVED THEM TO THE END

John 13: 1-17  
Key verse 13: 1

"It was just before the Passover Feast. Jesus knew that the time had come for him to leave this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he now showed them the full extent of his love."

In chapter 12, we saw that Jesus triumphantly entered Jerusalem before the Passover. He came as the Savior King riding on a donkey, as God had promised in His Word. Then Jesus taught the principle of life: A kernel of wheat that falls into the earth and dies bears much fruit. Jesus himself died like a kernel of wheat and fell into the earth, and as fruit he brought righteousness in many who believe in him. We were allowed to decide by faith to follow the example of Jesus and the models of faith, to die to our old being and to fall into the earth for the campus mission to bring much fruit in the establishment of global spiritual leaders.

Today we learn about Jesus' love that goes to the end and the example of the washing of feet. In the midst of the sufferings of his Passion time, Jesus chose to love his disciples to the end and set an example by washing their dirty feet. I pray to God that He will open our hearts and eyes to His faithful love and example of foot washing and that with such love we too will leave an example for the next generation.

### 1. He showed them the full extent of his love (1-5)

Verse 1 says: " It was just before the Passover Feast. Jesus knew that the time had come for him to leave this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were

in the world, he now showed them the full extent of his love." That day was the day before Jesus would die on the cross. Jesus had been envied and criticized by the Jewish superiors from the beginning. They had harassed him and tried several times to seize him and stone him. Finally they had made the decision to kill Jesus. Now the hour had come. All they needed was the sign of the traitor to seize Jesus and deliver him to the Gentiles. Jesus recognized that his hour had come. How must Jesus have felt? His soul was very sad (12:27). In Luke 12:50 he confessed that he was very anxious. No one could help him. But in the midst of these sufferings, he loved his disciples to the end. He did not think of himself or of the unjust people, but of his disciples, how he could serve and help them and how God's work would be continued through them. Let us consider verse 1 again: "It was just before the Passover Feast. Jesus knew that the time had come for him to leave this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he now showed them the full extent of his love."

Who were his own and how had he loved them? His disciples were simple, untaught men from Galilee, most of them fishermen. Jesus had loved them before the foundation of the world was laid (Eph 1:4) and before they were formed in the womb (Gal 1:15). When he first met them, he had invited them: "Come and see!" His invitation had moved their hearts. They came and saw

and stayed with him. Jesus chose the Twelve and served them spiritually from the beginning by being with them, teaching them, testing and challenging them in faith, admonishing, rebuking and training them. The disciples were anything but perfect. Often they did not understand what Jesus wanted to tell them (4:27,33; 12:16). One of them failed the test of faith when feeding the five thousand (6:7). When Jesus came to them on the lake, they cried out in fear (6:19). Another asked for the way, although Jesus himself was sitting before him (14:5). Eventually, when he was captured and crucified, they would all run away and hide. They were apparently not worthy of Jesus' further concern. He could have given them up. But Jesus did not see them that way, but with unchanging love. He gave up none of them. As he had loved them, so he loved them to the end.

He loved them, even though they were so weak, deficient and lacking in understanding, with the hope that God would use them for his work of world mission. With this hope he had loved them and now he loved them to the end. Jesus' love is different from the love of men. The love of men is unfaithful and full of expectation and easily gets disappointed and cold and dies. Jesus' love is faithful. It is unchanging and unchangeable. Hebrews 13:8 says, "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever. Psalm 136:1 says, "Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good." Jesus' love never ends. Nor does it ever let itself be discouraged. 1 Corinthians 13: 5-8 say: "It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails. But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away."

I know a young man who grew up in the best conditions and got a good place to study. But he was very irresponsible. Tired of studying, he lay on his bed in a dark

room and fantasized, so that he almost failed in his studies. But Jesus loved him, invited him through his servants to study the Bible and to live in community. He had never learned to give thanks or to think of another person. But through God's servants he experienced Jesus' love that went to the end and could accept in faith that Jesus chose and called him of all people to be a warm-hearted shepherd and spiritual father for the European mission.

Jesus' decision to love his disciples until the end shows his faith. When we decide to love a person, we want him to prove himself worthy of our love. He should at least give thanks and act according to our expectations. But Jesus loved his deficient disciples to the end. In the time of his own sufferings his love became even clearer and hotter. Jesus also loves you and me with such love. With this love, we too can love every person as Jesus loved his own. Let us read verse 1 again: "It was just before the Passover Feast. Jesus knew that the time had come for him to leave this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he now showed them the full extent of his love." Jesus' love is faithful love that goes to the end. Let us learn from Jesus to love people with love that goes to the end and thereby prepare God's work in the next generation.

Let us consider verse 2: "The evening meal was being served, and the devil had already prompted Judas Iscariot, son of Simon, to betray Jesus." Here we see how one of the disciples, Judas, reacted to Jesus' love. Judas was one of the twelve. Jesus had chosen him, and he had experienced Jesus' love. But he had not accepted a word from Jesus. So the devil could put betrayal in his heart. He was tempted by the devil and acted worse than an animal by betraying his Lord for 30 silver pennies. The other disciples also ran away, but they repented by remembering the word of Jesus. Judas' example warns us against arrogance. The devil walks around like a roaring lion, seeking whom he devours. Without Jesus' word we are lost. What can protect us? We may

hear and accept Jesus' word. Jesus' word is the best protection against all temptations and accusations of Satan and helps us to be faithful to Jesus until the end.

What happened at dinner? Verse 3 says that Jesus knew that the Father had given everything into his hands and that he had come from God and went to God. Jesus was God himself. The Father had given everything into his hands to judge and give life to whomever he wished. He had come from God and now went back to God. What did this Jesus do? Let us read verses 4 and 5: "so he got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist. After that, he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples' feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around him."

Here Jesus shows his humble servants. Foot washing was actually the lowest form of slave labor. It was also an unpleasant service because feet are not clean. Some feet are cold, some sweaty, others fungus. When the disciples came together for dinner, they were supposed to wash their feet. But no one could bring themselves to do it. Peter looked at John. John looked at Thomas. Thomas closed his eyes and wondered why Nathaniel did not move. They lacked humility. When Jesus stood up and washed their feet, they were ashamed. Jesus, their Lord and Master, served them like a servant, washing their feet.

Jesus was not concerned with the feet of the disciples. Jesus wanted to show them something: the humble servanthip of a leader. Without humility there is no true leadership, no community and no growth. Some would like to wear a robe and sit at the table with him. But they are too proud to deal with the sinful concerns of the people. But a leader must be willing to take off his or her outer garment. Wherever there is a leader who takes off his robe and washes his dirty feet, God's mighty work happens. Over the past forty years, a servant of God has taken off the outer garment of academic education, title and position to help the sin-

sick young people through the Word and life community. He often listened for hours to their complaints and confessions of sin and gave them God's word according to their requests. As a result, some of them grew up to be responsible shepherds and leaders themselves. Jesus shows by his example that God's work is done through humility. Jesus was the most humble of all. He was God, but he emptied himself and took the form of a servant and became obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. To serve us, the dirty sinners, he gave his life. Through Jesus' humility and self-emptying until death on the cross, we were allowed to receive forgiveness, die to sin and rise with him to new life.

Some say that spiritually, Europe has no hope. This is because there are hardly any leaders who follow the example of Jesus, and Jesus' humility is hardly taught. But history shows that there have always been some who learned and practiced Jesus' love and humble servanthip during the time of the tribulations. Dwight D. Eisenhower was the commander-in-chief during the Allied invasion of Normandy in 1944 and was considered a war hero. After the war, a journalist from the New York Times joined him. Eisenhower could have held her in low esteem and boasted himself. But he turned to this single person and served her, so that in the end the journalist herself felt like a great person. God's work of spiritual renewal and revival of Europe also happens through humility, namely through selfless, humble leaders who exercise Jesus' love that goes to the end and makes others great.

## 2. I have set you an example (6-17)

Let us read verses 6 to 8: "He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, "Lord, are you going to wash my feet?" Jesus replied, "You do not realize now what I am doing, but later you will understand." "No," said Peter, "you shall never wash my feet." Jesus answered, "Unless I wash you, you have no part with me." Here Jesus experienced Pe-

ter's reaction to his love. Simon Peter was the top disciple of Jesus. When Jesus had seen him, he had said to him (1,42): "You are Simon son of John. You will be called Cephas" (which, when translated, is Peter)." On many occasions Jesus had paid special attention to Peter. Once it happened that many disciples left Jesus and did not want to go with him anymore. But Peter said (6:68,69): "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. We believe and know that you are the Holy One of God." But now Peter reacted very negatively. When Jesus came to him with the pelvis and the apron, he said: "Lord, are you going to wash my feet?" Jesus told him to trust, even if he did not understand, but Peter said again: "No. You shall never wash my feet!" Apparently, Peter spoke out of respect. But in truth he was too proud and foolish to accept Jesus' humble servanthip. He was embarrassed to show his dirty feet. Peter first wanted to wash his own feet and sit next to Jesus with washed feet. But then he would have no part in Jesus. Without washing his feet there would be no relationship and no spiritual life between him and Jesus. When Peter heard this, he immediately wanted a full bath: "Lord, not just my feet but my hands and my head as well!" Probably he had sinned a lot in his head and with his hands. But Jesus was not talking about the one time rebirth, but about regular washing and new life. Let us read verses 10-11: "Jesus answered, "A person who has had a bath needs only to wash his feet; his whole body is clean. And you are clean, though not every one of you." For he knew who was going to betray him, and that was why he said not every one was clean."

Here we learn that the washing of feet is absolutely necessary for the relationship with Jesus. The disciples were pure because they had accepted Jesus, the incarnate Word of God. But without the foot-washing love they would have no part in Jesus, that is, no relationship and no eternal life. According to John 17:3, eternal life is the relationship with Jesus Christ. We need the foot-washing love, that is, the regular cleansing from sin, in order to walk with Je-

sus in eternal life. The young Count von Zinzendorf visited the Francke Foundations in Halle for six years. There he learned not only for school. August Hermann Francke also accepted him into the daily word and table fellowship and washed the feet of rebellious and godless thoughts. Later Zinzendorf was able to resist the temptations of the pleasure-seeking life of the nobility. In Herrnhut he took in many refugees of various origins and washed their feet until they repented of their selfishness and became a spiritual unity, from which numerous lay missionaries were sent all over the world.

We need the daily foot washing. Without foot-washing, everyone lives in his own world of thought without spiritual, eternal life. Jesus offers us his foot-washing love, so that we may have a part in him in communion with him. What a grace it is that in spiritual communities we have the opportunity to have our dirty feet washed, especially our thinking influenced by godless humanism, be it in daily bread, in communities of opinion, in eating, in community of life. In which community do you have your feet washed? And what community do you form in which young people's feet are washed so that they may be cleansed of their sins and have a part in Jesus and eternal life.

Let us read verses 12 to 15: "When he had finished washing their feet, he put on his clothes and returned to his place. "Do you understand what I have done for you?" he asked them. "You call me 'Teacher' and 'Lord,' and rightly so, for that is what I am. Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you." Jesus was their Lord and Master. By washing their feet, he gave them an example that they should do as he had done to them. As he had washed their feet, so they should wash each other's feet.

Until now, the disciples had hardly thought about washing other people's feet. But Jesus now left them, and they should continue

the work of world mission. Through his example, Jesus showed them what they should do.

What should they do? They should wash each other's feet. This meant that they were allowed to practice the love with which he had loved them. Indeed, the apostles followed Jesus' example. Peter became the shepherd of the first Christians. Once he went with John to the temple after the day of Pentecost. In front of the gate sat a paralytic who was carried in daily and asked for alms. Peter exhorted him, "Look at us," and then said, "Silver or gold I do not have, but what I have I give you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk." He took him by the hand and lifted him up. This beggar received a new life. He ran and jumped around and praised God. They took him into their community and helped him to no longer be carried and begged, but to praise the power of God and to proclaim the name of Jesus. The disciples followed the example of Jesus by addressing the sinful concerns of the believers in the daily foot-washing. Many received the true and eternal life and even gave their lives as martyrs for it. But some, like Ananias and Sapphira, were convicted of their sin and were beaten by God. When the disciples followed the example of Jesus and washed the feet of sinners, a great work was done. As Jesus had promised, after Jesus went to the Father, they did even greater works than Jesus, and the Word of God spread to the ends of the earth (John 14:12).

Humanism teaches that one must be tolerant. One must accept everyone as they are and not try to change them. This means that one must also tolerate sin. Mission, preaching of repentance and washing of feet are illegal invasions of privacy. Because of these humanistic teachings, some churches have completely abandoned mission. Others have stopped washing each other's feet and are now only involved in fun fellowship. The consequence of this is that there are so many mentally ill people. But the disciples follow the example of Jesus. Jesus clearly says: "I have set you an example that you

should do as I have done for you." We Christians are called to follow Jesus' example and wash our feet among ourselves. If we only replaced one-to-one Bible study with group Bible study and then abolished it completely, we would be committing a great sin. If we replaced global leadership empowerment with a marriage market for the youth, we could not expect God's work to happen in the next generation. Even if we gave up living together instead of following Jesus' example, God would not bless our work.

But what happens if the disciples follow Jesus' example? Firstly, they will be blessed. Let us read verses 16 and 17: "I tell you the truth, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them." Those who follow Jesus' example and humbly serve sinners to the end are blessed. Jesus describes this bliss in Matthew 5:7-12: "Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God. Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you." Second, if the disciples follow the example of Jesus, the work of disciple making will continue until Jesus returns. God's work is always the work of the manger by those who are left over. If a church listens more to the spirit of the times than to Jesus, it will only be an organization. Let us therefore repentantly listen to Jesus' word: "I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you", so that God's work of raising up disciples may also be done in this generation and the following generation.

Today we learn how Jesus loved His own to the end, even in the midst of His suffering,

and gave them an example by washing their feet so that they might do what He had done to them. We learn to love the disciples to the end and to raise them up as great men. We also learn to help the next generation to follow Jesus' example, so that God's work is done to the end. Let us pray that we too will leave our lives as an example for the next generation.