

The humility of Jesus

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- [0 : 0 0] Well, I want to start this morning by asking you to think of some of your most embarrassing moments. You don't have to share them, but everybody has them, those awkward, embarrassing moments in life.
- Whether it's, as I heard a pastor did this morning, well, he didn't do it this morning, I heard it this morning. A woman came back from holiday and he said, wow, I see you're pregnant again.
- But she wasn't, which was quite awkward. Another interesting pastor embarrassing moment I heard about was when a pastor forgot to switch off his radio mic and he went to the toilet just before the sermon.
- Or it might be sending a rather private message to your spouse only to discover that you sent it to your mother instead. I've heard of that one. Or, as happened to me once, walking into the wrong flat by mistake and finding yourself standing in the middle of a stranger's family dinner with a stuffed chicken under your arm.
- I'll tell you about that later, you can ask me. It's a long story. Anyway, we've all got those awkward moments in life, don't we? Whether it's because of something that we do or something that someone else does that puts us in an awkward situation.
- [1 : 0 5] Well, this morning we read about a rather awkward situation that Jesus' disciples found themselves in, in John 13, because of something he did, which they became quite embarrassed about.
- See, because at one dinner, he stripped down to a towel and washed their feet. Totally unexpected. They didn't ask for this. They didn't know it was going to happen.
- And if you think about it, it's a very strange thing to do, isn't it? In our culture, as well as in their culture. I mean, imagine, to put it in a different way, imagine you went to dinner at a friend's house and then halfway through dinner they offered to, I don't know, cut your toenails or trim your nose hairs.
- You know, offering you some piece of personal hygiene. It's a weird thing to do. And you can understand why the disciples felt awkward. Also, in that culture, the act of washing someone's feet was something that only the lowliest of slaves did.
- In fact, a Jewish slave wasn't even allowed to wash feet. Only a Gentile slave could, which shows what an awkward and weird and despised thing it was. It's certainly not the job of a well-respected rabbi who had built up this following of disciples.
- [2 : 1 5] And so they feel awkward and rather embarrassed. And we see that in Peter's reaction in verse 8. If you look down there, he says to Jesus, no, you shall never wash my feet.
- He's adamant. He doesn't want Jesus to come and touch his smelly, dirty feet. Why? Why does he object to being served by Jesus?
- Most likely because of his pride. In fact, our pride is often what stops us from being able to accept the service of others. He doesn't want this man he respects to have to deal with his dirty male Middle Eastern feet that have been walking around dusty streets with cow dung and stuff.

You know, that'll be embarrassing for him. He doesn't want his relationship with Jesus to be tainted by this kind of experience. But I think that's really the challenge of the story.

The story has many challenges for us, which I hope we'll see this morning. But, you know, while on one level it is a story about the humility of Jesus to serve in this way.

[3 : 19] That's what stands out. On another level, it's also a story about the difficulty we have in being served by Jesus, which Peter kind of gives us as an example.

And I think it's because of pride often. And that's what I want us to concentrate on this morning. We can go into depth in the other aspects of this passage during our growth groups.

And I encourage you to go to that. If you really want the full benefit of these passages, don't just come to church on Sunday. Because there's only so much we can cover. Go to growth group during the week.

And there's many of them. And you can really get into depth, ask your questions, and apply it specifically to your lives. But what I want us to do with this passage this morning is just think about the many ways that our pride can get in the way of living the Christian life.

Because as we go through the story, we'll see at least three different ways that our pride is challenged. So firstly, our pride is challenged by the nature of God's love for us.

[4 : 18] The nature of God's love for us. So look from verse 1 with me. It was just before the Passover festival. Jesus knew that the hour had come for him to leave this world and go to his father.

Having loved his own who were in the world. He loved them to the end. Okay, so this story here, first of all, is here to show us just the nature of love that Jesus has for his disciples.

And what he did to demonstrate that love to them. The people that he has called out of this world. And we see here, it's a type of love that is unexpected and totally undeserved.

You know, if anybody's going to wash feet in this story, it should be the disciples taking their clothes off and washing Jesus' feet, not the other way around. These guys, I mean, we've already followed them through John.

We've already seen the mistakes they've made. We've already seen their weaknesses and their shortcomings. They didn't deserve. They didn't do anything to deserve Jesus washing their feet, except, of course, having dirty feet.

[5 : 21] That was the only qualification that they brought to the table. And they certainly didn't expect him to go to the extent he does here for them. Up until this point, they knew that Jesus cared for them.

They knew that Jesus was concerned for them. But they didn't quite know that Jesus would love them to this extreme degree. But, of course, that's the point. That's why Jesus does something so shocking.

He's showing the type of love that he has for his people is a love that goes above and beyond what they expect and what they deserve. But it's not only for his disciples then, of course.

This story is here in the Bible because God is revealing through it the type of love he has for all that he has chosen out of the world. All of the people that God chooses out of the world and called to himself through faith in Jesus.

It demonstrates the death and the unexpected nature of God's love for his people. Because believers in Christ today are those who God has called out of the world, right?

[6 : 25] He has chosen those people to be his out of the world by giving faith in Christ. Faith in Christ is a gift. It's not something you wake up one morning and decide you're going to believe.

It's something that God does in you, the Bible teaches. And those who have faith in Christ are those who God has chosen out of the world. And if you are one of those chosen people, it's here that you find out just how God loves you.

How much? To what extent? This story shows you the type of love God has for you every day. And just think about that for a minute. The God of the universe, the God who created all things, the God who deserves all praise and glory from us, which we learned last week.

He showed us that he has a love for his people that goes beyond what you would ever expect and what you tend to expect. And a love that is totally undeserved. And once you realize as a believer that you are loved like that, it does change your world.

It does change your life. And I don't think we often remember or even get to the point of realizing just how intense the love of God for his children actually is. Because if we did, it would totally transform the way we live and the way we feel.

[7 : 40] We would never feel unloved. We would never feel worthless. It's an amazing experience. And really, it's an experience that only a believer can have. To know for sure that God loves them to this degree.

But it's also hard to accept. And I think that's one of the reasons we don't often experience this love of God in our lives.

Because we struggle to accept it because of our pride. Okay? Because the truth is, think about it, we want to be loved for a reason, don't we?

We want to know what it is about us that people love. We want to be lovable. And we want to know the particular things that are lovable so that we can build our identity and our self-worth on those things.

Because that's what we typically do. Whether you know it or not, your value of yourself, your self-worth is based on what the people in your life love about you. And so we want to know what that is.

[8 : 43] We want to know the things that people love about us. But for a Christian, that's not where our identity must come from. It can't. If the primary love that God has for us is undeserved, basically by definition it means that it's not because of anything lovable in you.

And it's hard for us to accept that. It's hard for us to base our identity on something that's not within us. But it's something we need to learn to do if we are believers.

In fact, as we've been reading through John, have you noticed what the Apostle John calls himself throughout the Gospel? He doesn't refer to himself by name. What does he call himself, anyone?

The disciple that Jesus loves. That's how he refers to himself. And at first it might seem a bit arrogant to say that. Kind of, it seems like he's saying I was his favorite.

Yeah. I was the one he loved. But that's not what he means. He's not saying Jesus didn't love the other disciples too. What he's saying is that his new identity, John, since becoming a Christian, since becoming a believer, his identity is based on the unconditional love that he has found in Jesus, that Jesus has for him, and nothing else.

[9 : 52] It's not worth basing on anything else once he has realized that he is loved by the creator of the universe. And that's why he's not the clever disciple, or the handsome disciple, or the loyal disciple, but he is the disciple Jesus loved.

Look, throughout John, you'll see that's what he calls himself. We see it here in this passage, in verse 23, for example. He calls himself nothing other than the disciple Jesus loved, because he's realized what makes him who he is in eternity.

What is the core of his true identity is not anything within himself. It's the undeserved love that Jesus has lavished on him. And that, that needs to be the identity of every true Christian, every true believer.

That is what, one of the things that distinguishes a true believer from anyone else in the world, is that their identity is not based on what is lovable about them.

Their identity is based on the relationship they have with God. A Christian is someone who has come to realize they are loved by God because of nothing within themselves.

[11 : 06] Someone who comes to realize they're loved by God, and they've done nothing to deserve that. That they are loved unconditionally every single day. And that is an amazing, amazing truth to know, if you know it.

And whether or not you live like that, and you realize that about yourself, will be seen in how you react to your own sin. It's very interesting to observe when we sin, how we react, how it makes us feel, how it makes us think.

So let me ask you, when you sin, does it make you feel further from God? When you sin, does it strain your relationship with God? Does it push you away from Him? Does it make you want to hide from God because you're ashamed?

Well, it'll only do that if you think that God's love for you is based on how well you perform, won't it? If you think it's based on how capable you are not to sin. Which means that to feel far from God when you sin, to run away from Him, to feel unworthy of Him, weirdly enough, is actually pride.

It's actually your pride pushing you away from God because it's saying, I'm normally close to God because I deserve to be. Well, that pride that drifts us away from God when we sin, that pride needs to die if we're to experience unconditional love from God.

[12 : 28] It's not our pride which He wants to lavish on us, which He wants to transform our lives with, but it's our pride which stops us from accepting that love for ourselves. And it's only when that pride dies that we can really experience the kind of love and the kind of life that God wants us to experience as believers.

And that's the first way our pride is challenged by the story, just to realize the unconditional type of love that God has for His people. But that's not the only way. Secondly, our pride is challenged by our need for forgiveness, which this story implies.

So look down to verse 8. Jesus now responds to Peter's objection, and He says, Unless I wash you, you have no part with Me. And it's at this point in the story that we realize Jesus is not just talking about personal hygiene.

He's saying that this whole thing that He's doing has a deeper meaning, as all of His other signs in the Gospel of John. And so we've got to ask, what is the deeper meaning of what He's doing here?

And He doesn't just think that His disciples have a little bit extra body odor, and they need a bit of a wash, and He's not going to enjoy His supper until they're clean. That's not what it's about.

[13 : 39] It's about something else. And we see, when we look at it in the context of where it is in John, you see in verse 1, the reason Jesus does this is because He knows that His hour has come, His hour to die.

And in verse 7, He says, You do not realize now what I am doing, but later you will understand. When is this later? Well, it's when His hour comes, when He goes to the cross, when He dies, which is what all of John has been pointing towards.

It's then, He says, that this foot washing, this act that He's doing now, will make sense. It'll click. It'll suddenly, they'll see the significance of what He did when He dies.

So, in other words, this act is a sign pointing towards His death, pointing towards and explaining just what He's going to do when He's on the cross. Because when He was dying on the cross, He had a lot going on.

He couldn't have a little lesson with His disciples and sit them down and explain to them what's going on. He had to do that beforehand. And this foot washing is one of the primary ways that He displayed and explained to His disciples why He's going to die.

[14 : 44] Namely, on the cross is where He's going to strip Himself and humble Himself and make people clean. But not from physical dirt, from spiritual dirt, from sin.

That is why He went to die. Because His death will pay the penalty for those sins on the behalf of His people who trust in Him. And when they do that, His death cleans them of their guilt of sin just as effectively as water washed these disciples' feet.

Jesus' death has a cleaning power to clean you and me of our deepest sins that we're most ashamed of. And that's what this foot washing really means.

And that, of course, explains why God can love His people unconditionally. It explains why Jesus can love His disciples so much despite their failures, despite their sins.

Because He knows that He's going to the cross to pay for all those. And it's why God can love His people today unconditionally. Because the sin that used to get in the way of that relationship is now washed away.

[15 : 51] And so what Jesus means here, when He says, Unless I wash you, you have no part with Me. He's saying that you've got to let Him wash you if you're going to be one of His people.

That's the simple meaning of this. You've got to let Him come into your life and do His act to wash you of your sins.

Which seems easy. I mean, it seems something that we would obviously do. Let Jesus come and wash us of our sins so we can have an eternal relationship with our Heavenly Father. And enjoy Him and glorify Him forever in the new creation.

I mean, who wouldn't want that? Who wouldn't want Jesus to come and wash them? And yet, our pride doesn't want that.

Does it? Our pride is what stops us from letting Jesus come and wash us. Because to be washed requires that we first admit that we're dirty.

[16 : 49] And we don't want to do that. We don't want to admit that our mind and our habits and our desires are desperately sinful. And that we are not worthy of God.

And we are not worthy of eternal life. We're worthy of punishment. We don't want to admit that. Our pride doesn't want to admit that. And we don't want to admit that all of that sin and that failure to be the people that God made us to be is beyond our ability to cure.

We can't even fix ourselves. We don't want to admit that. And so, we've got to come to the point of overcoming that pride so that we can admit that we are dirty before Jesus can clean us.

You need to admit that you are unworthy of God. That you have sinned against Him. That you deserve His punishment. Have you done that yet? Have you actually let Jesus in to cleanse you and change you?

Or has your attitude to Him been, well, I'm fine. I don't need you to wash me. I can, you know, I'll come to church. I'll hear about you. But I'll keep you at arm's distance. I don't need you to come in and change me. I'm fine.

[17 : 51] That's a proud attitude that will prevent you from finding forgiveness. And perhaps you're still too proud to do that. To come to that point. And maybe something has been stopping you to come to that point.

And truly commit yourself to Jesus and let Him in. And now you realize it's because you're proud. It's because you don't want to admit that you are unworthy. That you are full of sin. Well, that pride needs to die if you're going to be washed by Jesus.

But even after you've done that. Now, I'm talking to believers who have come and let Jesus in and put their faith in Him. Even after you've done that, it doesn't mean that you must stop coming to terms with your sin.

That attitude of humble confession that brought you to Christ needs to be a regular part of your Christian walk to keep you with Christ. Because your sin doesn't just disappear after you become a Christian.

And if you've been a Christian for any length of time, you'll know that from experience. And we also learn that in this passage. Because as we read on, we see Peter kind of gets this idea now that Jesus, well, he needs Jesus to clean him.

[19 : 02] And so in typical Peter style, he takes it to the extreme and says, well, clean all of me. You know, verse 9. Then not just my feet and my hands, but my head as well. You know, if you're going to clean me, Jesus, please do a proper job.

But then Jesus answers and says something strange. Have a look from verse 10. Okay, so what does he mean?

It's a pretty weird thing to say. Well, what he's saying is that all of his disciples, except Judas, are already clean of sin. Now, I know he hasn't died on the cross for them yet. But he knows and he has confirmed in them the faith that is going to bring them to believe in him.

And he knows things before they happen. And so to him, they are already clean because of their faith, which Judas doesn't have. But this is the point. Even though they're justified through that faith, and they've been washed clean, they still need their feet washed because their feet tend to get dirty.

Our feet tend to get dirty, don't worry, no matter how clean we are. And we've seen that from, again, personal experience during the water crisis in Cape Town. So one of the things, if nothing else, that water restrictions has taught us is that we don't actually need to bath and shower as much as we thought we did, do we?

[20 : 24] We can actually get by showering and bathing maybe once every three days or so. And yet, despite that, we're still not happy to go to bed until we've cleaned our feet.

I don't know if that's just me. But especially if you've been walking around with open shoes all day, your feet tend to get dirty, your feet tend to get all these smells and stuff. And so while you don't need to bath, you do kind of need to wash your feet every day.

And Jesus is using that as an illustration for what happens with sin in our lives. You see, even though we are clean and we are forgiven and the price is paid if we're believers, we've been washed, we don't need to be washed again, we still tend to pick up sin and sinful habits as we go through life that cling to us and that we need to deal with and that we need to confess so that we can keep moving forward.

And just for the health of the Christian community, because you will sin against others in the Christian community. We sin against one another. And so we can't just hide those sins.

We can't just pretend like they didn't happen. James says, confess your sins to one another. And so regular confession of our failures and our sins, uncomfortable as that is, confession to God and to each other needs to be part of our Christian lifestyle daily.

[21 : 50] And it's not easy because of pride. Our pride is what stops us from coming and humbly saying, I'm sorry, I was wrong, I'm a sinner, forgive me.

Our pride prevents us from owning up when we've been wrong. And so think, what strained relationships do you have right now because you've been too proud to admit where you've been wrong?

Well, that pride needs to die too. Thirdly, our pride is challenged by the call to love others. And this, in some ways, is the biggest challenge to our pride this morning because there was a third purpose to this foot washing, not just to show us the nature of God's love and not just to point us to the cross, but also to be an example to us of what following Jesus looks like.

And we see that in verse 14 and 15. Have a look with me. Pretty clear what he's saying there.

He's saying that this kind of undeserved, unexpected, humiliating love is the kind of love that he expects his disciples to show now that they've experienced it.

[23 : 16] It's not the kind of love we see in the world, is it? We do see types of love in the world. People love, people do acts of service to others, but we don't see this type of love in this world outside of the household of faith, outside of the body of Christ.

Because most love is, in some ways, conditional. And it has its limitations. It's only so far that it'll go. And we tend to love those who have something in themselves worthy of that love.

And even if we don't, even if we do train ourselves to love the unlovable, we still put a limit on how much we're going to do that.

But this love that Jesus showed is unlimited. It's undeserved. It's a heavenly love. It's a window into God's character.

Because this love that Jesus shows is what makes God who he is. And later, John defines God simply by saying, God is love.

[24 : 20] And that, yes, that phrase is often misused to try to discount God's wrath for sin, which is equally part of his character. We saw last week.

However, central to who God is, is love. And not the type of love that we know. It's the type of love that Jesus showed here. Undeserved, unconditional, extreme, unlimited love is what makes God who he is, what glorifies him.

And that is the type of love that Jesus calls his followers to have so that even after he is gone, we can continue to glorify God by pointing other people to this kind of love.

Jesus commissioned his church, his body on earth, after his departure, to keep pointing people to heaven, to keep pointing people to the world, to come like he did when he was on earth.

And the way we do that is by loving like he loved. Because that is what the new creation will be like. The best way, the best advert for heaven, for the new creation that Jesus has come to save people into, is this type of love.

[25 : 32] Because it will be filled with that. It will be characterized. This new creation, imagine it for a second, will be a world where everybody loves everybody else to this extreme. Undeservedly, unlimited.

It will be amazing. Because of course, the greatest kind of experience that we can have as humans is to be loved like that. And it comes close, maybe in a parent's love for their child or a spouse's love for their spouse, although that's tainted with sin all the time, as we know.

But those are the most amazing experiences, aren't they? And yet, in the new creation, the world as it's meant to be, the restored world, that will be our experience every second of every day, from each other and from God.

And we need now, in this world, to be a little window of that new creation to come. We need to be ambassadors of heaven. And the way we do that is through our love.

And that's why Jesus goes on to say later, have a look down to verse 34. A new command I give to you, love one another, as I have loved you.

[26 : 34] So you must love one another. By this, everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another. That's what's going to mark out Jesus' disciples in this world. their otherworldly, heavenly love.

And he says, a new command I give to you. But what's new about it? Have you wondered that? I mean, surely the Old Testament teaches that we should, it does. We should love our neighbor. What's new about it?

Well, what's new about it is Jesus saying, as I have loved you. That's what makes it new. Now you must love, not with your human love, with its human limitations, that up until now you have only been able to love with.

Now you can and you must love with this new, otherworldly, undeserved, costly love that I have just shown you. That is what will mark out the people of God in this world.

That is what will make the world sit up and listen to us. Not our eloquent sermons or our flashy banners or our fancy website, but the love that we display for each other is what's going to make people listen and draw them to the gospel and draw them to glorify God and enjoy Him forever.

[27 : 43] But the question is, are you ready to love with that kind of love if you call yourself a Christian? Because it's costly, it's humbling, and it'll demand much from you, and your pride will stop you every day from loving like that.

Your pride will stop you from lowering yourself to love like Jesus loved here. And so there really is only one way you can love like this, and that is only if you have been loved like this first, and it's a real experience in your life.

See, Jesus didn't just tell His disciples to love in this way. He showed them, He loved them first. He took the initiative, and only when they experienced that ultimately when He died on the cross, when they worked out how much and what He did out of love for them, it's only when they got that, when they saw the humility of their Creator to lower Himself and humble Himself to wash their feet and to die their death, only then were they moved to the point of loving in the same way.

And it's the same with us. You can't love in this way unless you have genuinely experienced and you know God's unconditional love for you. You know, this kind of love is contagious.

You can't pass it on unless you've caught it first. Yes, it's kind of like a cold, but in a good way. You know, it's contagious. You have to catch it so that you can pass it on.

[29 : 14] It's only when you experience how much God loves you despite who you are. It's only when we know that as a community, when that is our common thing that we have in common with each other, that experience of God's love for us, it's only then that we'll be able to be the kind of people who can love each other and the world in that way and be the kind of church that can show this world who God really is.

Do you want to be part of that? Well, I do. Let's pray that God would help us. So, Lord Jesus, we thank you for this overwhelming and amazing demonstration of your love for the people you have chosen out of this world.

We've been reminded this morning that you have chosen us out of this world to love like that, to show others who you are, to show others the glory of God. But, Lord, we know it's hard to do that.

We know it's hard to love in this extreme way that you demonstrated for us because of our pride, because of our selfishness. And so, Lord, we pray that you would overcome that in our lives in this coming week, overcome all the things that stop us from loving like you loved.

Help us to realize all that you went through and the depth you went to, to lower yourself, to love us. And may that drive us on to love others.

[30 : 31] And through that, as we do that as a church community, would you draw others into this church to hear the gospel, to be saved, and to love you forever.

Amen. Thanks, Wer■. See you soon. After seeing you lazyeny, if yourself as you parley or you■ quemwell you...

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Maybe