

Taking up the Towel - Pastor Dennis Sisco

Sunday, February 21, 2010 AM Service

Text: John 13:1-14

Setting

Jesus took a towel and a basin and washed the feet of His disciples and instructed them to do the same for others.

Focus

The customs of foot washing is commendable but let us not lose the true meaning of foot washing and its significance. Jesus was showing us the concepts of service and submission.

Introduction

- Jesus not instituting an ordinance, such as, water baptism or communion
- If so, Jesus would have instituted it at the beginning of the disciples training
- Jesus would have submitted to a foot washing Himself as he had done with water baptism
- Most commentators wrote that its significance is in Jesus' example of humility
- Jesus had already set an IE of humility by taking on human form – by laying aside His glory and coming to earth as a servant

Physical manifestations

- Jesus giving an IE of a kind of physical manifestation He desires – that of “taking up the towel”
- When we speak of manifestations, we think of people in meetings falling to the ground
- Too many this seems strange
- A study of the Bible you learn that Jesus talked about a lot of unusual physical manifestations
- Jesus did not speak about falling to the ground
- He did speak of falling into the ground and dying – to bear fruit
- He spoke of the manifestation of taking up a cross
- Of cutting off an offending hand
- Plucking out an offensive eye
- Going the extra mile
- Unusual of all the manifestations Jesus talked about is His call to take up the towel

Truths of the Bible

- Gloss over certain truths because we don't understand their meaning
- IE [Galatians 5:13](#); [Ephesians 5:21](#)

Serving one another in love and submitting to one another in godly fear mean much more than taking orders from or being accountable to a higher authority.

Closer look at 3 words:

1. *Dirt,*
2. *Comfort*
3. *Unity*

I. Dirt Clinging to a Christian

- The 12 disciples were men beloved of God, full of love for His Son, pure hearted, in full communion with Jesus
- Yet they had dirty feet

Jesus was saying, “Your hearts and hands are clean, but your feet are not. They’ve gotten dirt in your daily walk with Me. You don’t need your whole body to be washed – only your feet.”

Define dirt – all about our sin – our faults and failures, our giving in to temptations.

How many right now have some dirt clinging to them? It’s not that you’ve turned your back on the Lord. On the contrary – you love Him more passionately than ever. But you fell, and now you’re grieving because your feet are dirty.

Read **Galatians 6:1**

Greek word for fault – a fall, a sin, a transgression.

We restore every Christian who falls into sin, if there is a repentant heart.

Foot washing in its deepest spiritual meaning, has to do with our attitude about the dirt we seen on another Christian.

What do you do when you’re face to face with someone who has fallen into a sin or transgression? What you do about the dirt has everything to do with the ministry of Jesus describe as taking up the towel.

- Christians can be very cruel!
- Believers often are ore vicious and destructive than the wicked.
- Jesus knew that. He knew how we react to the sight of dirt on someone else
- Holier than thou attitude
- Judging
- Gossiping
- Slandering
- Carnal Christians delight in seeing dirt on others.
- Their spreading of the dirt is the dirtiest sin of all
- We are to take up the towel of God’s mercy and go to that hurting one
- Submit all of our human inclinations to ignore them

- Judge them
- Expose them
- Lecture them
- Find fault with them
- We are to commit to being his friend
- We are to help wash away his sins by sharing the correcting, healing, washing, comforting Word of God

This is not overlooking or winking at sin. It is not calling evil good. We're talking about fallen saints who have repentant hearts yet are without hope. They know they have grieved the Lord – and they live with fear, guilt and rejection.

II. True comforters

- Picture walking through mud and how it cakes on your feet
- Feel much better when your feet are washed and clean

When Jesus washed the dirt from His disciple's feet, they were comforted. Meaning Jesus was teaching the comfort of transgressions removed.

Read **1 Corinthians 5** (man who fell into the terrible sin of incest)

- The man was unrepentant
- Paul directed the church to turn him over to Satan for the destruction of his flesh (to the saving of his spirit)
- Paul did not say the man was lost and going to hell
- Isolated from fellowship and given over to Satan's devices, so he would come to his senses and be driven to repentance

Read **2 Corinthians 2**

- The man had become repentant and the church had forgiven him
- Satan had brought him to despair
- The lust of his flesh had been destroyed
- The man had come back repentant

2 Corinthians 2:7-8

- This man was overwhelmed with grief and sorrow
- The church had seen his brokenness and humility and were overcome with a spirit of mercy
- They encouraged him, tenderhearted and washed his feet
- Now he was clean – restored to the body of Jesus Christ

Ephesians 4:32

- To take up the towel to restore a Christian
- Don't need to know the details of how that person got dirty feet
- You can't wash feet in a judge's robes

- Even Jesus washed Judas feet, even though Satan had already put betrayal in his heart

1 Corinthians 6:9-11

2 Timothy 2:24-26

True revival reflects this spirit of kindness – a spirit that's willing to take up the towel to cleanse and restore dirty believers.

III. Unity

Jesus taught us by washing the disciples feet a lesson on how to obtain unity of fellowship in the body of Christ.

John 13:6-8

- Jesus was saying, if I wash your feet we have grounds for fellowship, a basis for true unity

What did Jesus do for you when He cleansed you?

Conclusion

The secret of unity is when you take up the towel of mercy for a hurting, fallen Christian; you encourage them by embracing them in their hurt, by submitting in godly fear, washing away their feelings of worthlessness, anguish and despair and by loving and caring for him.

What have you done to that person by washing his feet?

- Constructed a firm foundation for true unity and fellowship.
- Can you imagine faith communities filled with such caring people?

How do I find people whose feet need washing?

- The same way you found them when you gossiped about them.

By God's grace, I am taking up the towel of mercy along with others and seek out those hurting ones whose feet need cleansing from dirt

John 13:14, 17

Are you ready to take up your towel in love?