

John 13:1-15, 34

January 2, 2011 – 2nd SUNDAY AFTER CHRISTMAS

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God's Glory is to Love

✦ **Dirty feet – selfish hearts (vv.1-11)**

✦ **Compelling example – powerful Word (vv.12-15, 34)**

In the name of Jesus, the Name of wondrous love, dear fellow worshipers of the Christ-Child:

One of the things I often try to encourage God's people to do is to come a little early to prepare your hearts for worship. Remember that Christian congregation in Beijing, China? Their pastors scold them not to come so early. They're lining up at 6:00 AM for a 10:00 AM service to make sure they get a seat among the thousands. We just need a few minutes to read the Scriptures and ask ourselves questions like, "Why were these hymns chosen for this Sunday?" Today, please notice the Sermon Hymn focuses on Jesus' Name: "Jesus! Name of Wondrous Love" (CW76). Why that focus today?

The answer is on your calendar and in Luke: "*On the eighth day, when it was time to circumcise him, he was named Jesus, the name the angel had given him before he had been conceived.*" (2:21) All Jewish boys were circumcised and named on the eighth day because that was the law God gave to Moses. We celebrate Jesus' birth on December 25th. By Jewish reckoning the eighth day would be New Year's Day when Jesus shed His first blood. The LORD's Christ was born to die. Every year Christmas and New Year's shout the wonder of it: **God's Glory is to Love**. Can we hear that shout even with...?

✦ **Dirty feet – selfish hearts (vv.1-11)**

"*It was just before the Passover Feast...*" That's why we usually consider this event in the Upper Room in the spring at the end of Lent on Maundy Thursday when it happened. What we notice on this 2nd SUNDAY AFTER CHRISTMAS is the detail and depth of God's love. It's like a beautiful painting. The closer you look, the more you wonder at the colors, lighting and brush strokes of God.

But I must admit that like most guys I prefer a fine machine. There's a young woman who isn't interested in pickups, yet whenever she admires one, her husband asks, "You know that's a Dodge Ram?" He likes Fords. Her answer is always the same. "I just like the way it looks. So powerful." But guys prefer the power. That's why I chuckle remembering my Granddad's hired man. Harry Chess could fix almost any machine, especially heavy diesel equipment. But he couldn't seem to fix Granddad's pickup because Mr. Chess hated anything Dodge. People have their preferences in machines and medicine.

One woman in the 1990's was nearly shouting on the phone. She needed medical help. As I tried to encourage her and invite her to church, she became increasingly angry. She did not want to hear that the doctors' skill and medical technology is a gift of God. Medicine only works as God allows. Finally she almost lost it, saying what a fool I was to pin all my hopes on a baby boy!

People treat God like that. They're like an ant in the middle of the road shouting at a Dodge Ram because they don't like it barreling down on them. I'm like the ant in the middle of the road too. But especially at Christmas time I see the kind hearted Father driving. I hear His Son say, "Dad, stop just a minute." This Father never questions the wisdom and love of His Son. He jumps down, runs over and gently picks me up. "See, Dad! We don't want to run over this one." He holds me close until I grow up in Him. Then I get to ride in back where I can fly the flag for Him. I don't blow away because His dear Holy Spirit is the wind behind us and in front of us and all around us holding us steady, strong and true.

Look! I marvel at God's love in the manger. I marvel how He was born to die. I marvel that He was so patient whenever He tried to tell His disciples, and they objected, then argued about who was the greatest. Look at the feet Jesus washed. Two were connected to a mouth that would betray Him. Two were connected to lying eyes that would flash three times swearing not to even know Him. The rest of

those feet would run away in Jesus' hour of need. To wash those feet was more than the work of a slave. Only the infinitely merciful Savior-God could perform such a feat of kindness on those feet. How Christ puts us to shame when we think some job in the family or the church or community is somehow beneath us. Jesus could go no lower than those feet – except in His own death and burial. “Glory be to Jesus!”

How could Jesus, God's own Son, wash the feet of Judas? *“The...devil had already prompted Judas Iscariot, son of Simon, to betray Jesus.”* Judas had been listening to Jesus, the Master Teacher and Preacher for nearly three years. What happened? His hearing was not mixed with faith. Judas did not *“put on the full armor of God...[in order to] take [his] stand against the devil's schemes.”* Judas failed to *“take up the shield of faith, with which [to] extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one.”* (Ephesians 6:11,16 NIV) So when Satan literally threw at Judas' heart the thought of betraying Jesus, thirty pieces of silver was enough. The fault belonged to Judas alone because his true Friend Jesus did everything possible to win him away from evil. Yes, Jesus even washed Judas' feet along with the rest of His errant followers. Judas was proof that **God's Glory is to Love – Dirty feet and selfish hearts.**

✦ **Compelling example – powerful Word** (vv.12-15, 34)

Many imagine they can answer Jesus' when He sat down again: *“Do you understand what I have done?”* Some churches even have a foot washing ceremony, then go back to arguing. Modern translators don't help when they sprinkle this with “should” and “must.” *“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....A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another.”* (John 13:14f,34 NIV) Jesus' **example** is **Compelling** because He is God's **powerful Word**.

What Jesus says more literally is this: “In love you owe me, your Master Teacher and Lord, to wash each other's feet. I have given you a powerful example in order that you will do just as I have done for you....A new command I give to you in order that you may love each other. In this way I have loved you in order that you also may love each other.” Jesus is showing us His heart in order to win ours.

God's attitude has always been to show His **Glory** in grace and mercy. That was Moses' appeal many times when the LORD wanted to destroy the Israelites in the desert. *“Now may the LORD's strength be displayed, just as you have declared: ‘The LORD is slow to anger, abounding in love and forgiving sin and rebellion. Yet he does not leave the guilty unpunished; he punishes the children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation.’ In accordance with your great love, forgive the sin of these people, just as you have pardoned them from the time they left Egypt until now.”* (Numbers 14:17–19 NIV) Moses asked God, *“Show me your glory.”* (Exodus 33:18 NIV) Then on Christmas to lowly shepherds the angels sang, *“Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace, good will toward men”* (Luke 2:14 KJV) They saw God's **Glory** in the manger, then ran on happy feet to tell everyone the Good News. God's **Glory is to Love** us and forgive us for the sake of the blood His own Son. Jesus shed His first blood for us on the eighth day when He was circumcised. This message of forgiving grace is Good News of which another sinner named Paul said, *“I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile.”* (Romans 1:16 NIV)

We don't have basins handy for washing each other's feet, but there is something we can do for each other in order to do as Jesus has done for us. If a father brings his daughter to church a little late because his wife and children are sick at home, what kind of feet will he find? God is bringing many feet to worship. We can show that ours have been washed by where we sit. Should our feet be hard by the aisle? Or ready to slide over even before an usher can ask? God has given us eyes to see and ears to hear and feet to move at the impulse of His love. **God's Glory is to Love.** May His **Compelling example** and **powerful Word** of all-forgiving grace cleanse our feet to move for Him, especially out there where so many need to hear about the Father's Son who grew up to be our Savior Jesus Christ. With hearts and feet cleansed by Jesus, may our lips speak His praise. **Glory be to God! Amen.**

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