

Main Idea: In John 13:1-11 we see in living color a love like no other. There are four scenes in the story, which show us four things about love. We looked at the first two last week, will consider the third today, and the fourth next time, the Lord permitting.

- I. We see love’s context (1-2).
- II. We see love’s communication (3-5).
 - A. Jesus’ love is motivated by what He knew (3).
 - B. Jesus’ love is demonstrated by what He did (4-5).
- III. We see love’s challenge (6-11).
 - A. Peter exhibited a wrong view of himself (6-7).
 1. Some people think they’re just fine.
 2. Some people think they’re too dirty.
 - B. Peter exhibited a wrong view of Christ (8).
 1. Christ reaches out to dirty people.
 2. To belong to Christ, a person must accept what Jesus offers.
 - C. Peter exhibited a wrong view of cleansing (9-11).
 1. To become a follower of Christ, you need a bath.
 2. If you are a follower of Christ, you need your feet washed.
 3. It’s possible to follow Christ and still be unclean.
- IV. We see love’s commission (12-17).

Make It Personal: We need to ask ourselves some questions.

1. Am I thinking rightly about myself?
2. Am I thinking rightly about Christ?
3. Am I thinking rightly about the cleansing work of Christ?
4. Am I thinking rightly about the condition of my feet?

We’re going to learn about the power of true love this morning as we investigate the story of the One who washed 24 dirty feet in John 13. I’d like to share a couple of stories I read recently about men who’ve been transformed by this love. The stories come from a book by Don Stephens called *War and Grace*. I’ll begin with this one, and share the other at the end.

On Sunday, December 7, 1941, 360 Japanese torpedo planes attacked and bombed Pearl Harbor. The man who led the assault was 39 year old Mitsuo Fuchida who later wrote, “My heart was filled with joy at my success...It was the most thrilling exploit of my career.”¹

When Fuchida returned to Japan he was given the privilege of explaining to Emperor Hirohito the details of the Pearl Harbor attack. And the emperor was impressed. Though a small man in stature, Fuchida was “a hard man with a strong personality.”² Hitler was his hero and he actually grew a toothbrush moustache in imitation of him.

In 1942, while on board his aircraft carrier, Fuchida had an operation for appendicitis. He then disobeyed doctor’s orders and left sick bay and went up to the deck. While there American dive-bombers hit his ship. A huge explosion threw him 10 feet in the air and the crunching fall broke both of his legs. However, if he had been below in sickbay, he would have been burned alive with the 30 men trapped there.

In 1945 he was in Hiroshima the day before the American B-29 bomber dropped the first atom bomb. Unexpectedly, an order sent him to another base, or he would have perished with the rest of the city.

**Note: This is an unedited manuscript of a message preached at Wheelersburg Baptist Church. It is provided to prompt your continued reflection on the practical truths of the Word of God.

¹ Taken from Don Stephens, *War and Grace*, p. 119.

² *Ibid.*, p. 120.

After Japan lost the war, Fuchida became bitter and disillusioned. He drank and had a serious moral lapse. He wrote a book called *No More Pearl Harbor*, in which it occurred to him that “the mess the world was in was due to human nature.”³

Then Fushida met Japanese prisoners returning home from the USA. When he asked how they were treated, the answer was always, “Well.” Several told him the story of Peggy Covell, a young lady who visited and cared for Japanese POWs. When asked why she helped them, she replied, “Because Japanese soldiers killed my parents.”

“It turned out,” explains Stephens, “that her parents had been Christian missionaries who had been captured and beheaded as spies. Peggy was convinced that her parents would have forgiven their executioners before death. Could she do less? So she volunteered to work with Japanese prisoners of war. Fuchida was very impressed by this story, which exhibited grace and goodness that his Shintoism could not embrace.”⁴

In 1948 a missionary named Timothy Peitsch met Fuchida on a Tokyo railway station and gave him a tract. It was a true story about an American soldier named Jacob DeShazer who endured horrible atrocities as a Japanese POW, read the Bible while a prisoner, received Christ as his Savior, and actually forgave the men who so mistreated him.

After reading the tract, Fuchida bought a New Testament, and was deeply impacted by Jesus, especially the story of His crucifixion and His prayer from the cross, “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.”

Later Fuchida explained what happened:

“I was impressed that I was one of those for whom Christ had prayed these words. The many men I had killed had been slaughtered in the name of patriotism, because I did not understand the love that Christ wishes to implant within every heart. Right at the moment I read that prayer, I seemed to meet Jesus for the first time. I understood the meaning of his death as a substitute for my wickedness, and so, in prayer I requested him to forgive my sins and change me from a bitter disillusioned ex-pilot into a well-balanced Christian with a purpose for living. That date, 14 April 1950, is the day I became a new person. My complete view of life was changed by the intervention of Christ.”⁵

Mitsuo Fuchida was 47 years old. He later became a full-time evangelist and traveled the world telling people about Christ. He returned to Pearl Harbor several times, not with bombs this time, but with the Word of God. He said, “I would give anything to retract my actions at Pearl Harbor, but it is impossible. Instead, I now work at striking the death blow to the basic hatred which infests the human heart and causes such tragedies.”⁶

And he made it clear that Christ alone can remove that hatred. Fuchida later met the man who wrote the tract, Jacob DeShazer, and went to his church in Salem, Oregon, and met his mother, a godly woman who had prayed for her son’s salvation and safety the whole time he was a POW. And the Lord did more than she asked, not only saving and keeping her son, but using his story to reach this enemy of America. “How unpredictable and wonderful is the providence of God!” was the thought that came to Fuchida’s mind.⁷

³ Ibid., p. 124.

⁴ Ibid. p. 124.

⁵ Ibid. p. 125.

⁶ Ibid. pp. 127-8.

⁷ Ibid. p. 172.

Mitsuo Fuchida continued to preach Christ until 1976 when His Savior called him home to heaven at the age of 73.

My friend, no one is too far gone for the love of Jesus. No one. The love of Jesus Christ can reach and rescue anyone.

You say, “But God is holy. So how can He accept wicked sinners?” That’s a good question. Love, even perfect love like God’s, cannot simply overlook sin, whether that sin belongs to Mitsuo Fuchida or you and me, for to do so would be unjust. For a sinner to be reconciled to God, divine love must do something, which it did in John 13.

In John 13:1-11 we see in living color a love like no other. There are four scenes in the story, which reveal for us four things about love. We looked at the first two last week, will consider the third today, and then the fourth next time, the Lord permitting.

I. We see love’s context (1-2).

As we saw last time, John tells us four things pertaining to the setting.

A. It’s time for Passover. Verse 1 says, “It was just before the Passover Feast.” Passover is the holiday in which the Jews remember how God rescued their forefathers from bondage in Egypt. That rescue required the shedding of the blood of lambs. “When I see the blood, I will pass over you,” said the Lord (Ex 12:13). In less than 24 hours another lamb, the final lamb, will be slain.

B. It’s time for Jesus to go. John continues in verse 1, “Jesus knew that the time had come for him to leave this world and go to the Father.” Jesus is on a mission. They’re not taking His life from Him. He’s *giving* it. It’s His mission to give it, and once He does, He’s going back home to His Father in heaven.

But it’s not just time to go...

C. It’s time for Jesus to show. Notice the end of verse 1, “Having loved his own who were in the world, he now showed them the full extent of his love.” Jesus has always loved these 12 men, and He’s shown them in so many ways. But now He’s about to love them to the uttermost, to the max, in a way never before seen in the world.

There’s one more piece to the context.

D. It’s time for Jesus to be betrayed. Verse 2 says, “The evening meal was being served, and the devil had already prompted Judas Iscariot, son of Simon, to betray Jesus.” Nobody suspected Judas. To the naked eye, he was just like the other eleven. But Jesus knew. Judas, instigated by the Evil One himself, is about to betray Him.

Friends, love always has a context from which it operates. It was the context of killed parents and a prison camp for Peggy Covell. God used her love in that context to reach hardened sinners like Mitsuo Fuchida. For Jesus, the context was a Passover Feast, a betrayal, and a mission given to Him by His Father.

II. We see love’s communication (3-5).

True love expresses itself, as Jesus exemplified, with both actions and words. Out of the God-given context, it communicates. John wants us to know a couple of things about the Savior’s love, first...

A. Jesus’ love is motivated by what He knew (3). Notice verse 3, “Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under his power, and that he had come from God and was returning to God.” What did Jesus know? Three things...

1. *He knew what He possessed.* All things under His power. All authority (Matt 28:18).

2. *He knew where He came from.* From God.

3. *He knew where He was going.* To God.

How could Jesus do what He's about to do? It's because of what He knew about Himself—what He possessed, where He came from, and where He was going. That's how He could wash His betrayer's feet, and wash our wicked souls too. His love was motivated by what He knew.

B. Jesus' love is demonstrated by what He did (4-5). And what did He do? Look at verses 4-5, six actions.

1. *He left the meal.* Verse 4 says, "So he got up from the meal."

2. *He laid aside His garments.* He "took off his outer clothing."

3. *He wrapped Himself with a towel.* "Wrapped a towel around his waist (4)."

4. *He poured water.* Verse 5 says, "After that, he poured water into a basin."

The basin was sitting by the door, as in every Jewish home. But no one had used it to this point that evening. Until the Master took action. And what did He do with the water?

5. *He began to wash feet.* Whose feet? His twelve disciples. He "began to wash his disciples' feet." Why did He wash these feet? Because they're dirty, and this isn't their home. Their dirty feet are spreading grime on someone else's floor. Why didn't one of the disciples do something about this? Because they're consumed with other thoughts, self-centered ones, like which of them was the greatest (Luke 22:24).

6. *He dried feet with the towel.* "Drying them with the towel that was wrapped around him," says verse 5.

No doubt the room was dead quiet. I don't know how many feet Jesus washed and dried before he came to Peter, but it's at this point the silence is broken. That brings us to scene 3, love's challenge.

III. We see love's challenge (6-11).

Whenever love operates, particularly extravagant love, it's often challenged. Notice verse 6, "He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, 'Lord, are you going to wash my feet?'" And then in verse 8 he doesn't just question Jesus, but flat out resists His love by saying, "No, you shall never wash my feet."

Why did Peter do that? Why did he challenge Jesus in such a blunt fashion? His challenge reveals three wrong views. They're the same wrong views we will often exhibit as well as face when showing love.

A. Peter exhibited a wrong view of himself (6-7). Consider his question, "Lord, are you going to wash my feet?" Why would he ask that? It's linked to how he viewed himself.

There are a couple of reasons why a person might resist the display of love Jesus is showing Peter.

1. *Some people think they're just fine.* "Wash my feet? Why do that? They're not dirty. Leave me alone. Go help someone who needs the help. I'm just fine."

That kind of thinking causes many people to resist Jesus' offer of cleansing. They don't think they need it. They're good people and just fine.

I was talking with a friend about Christ once and it offended him and he responded, "You make it sound like I'm a bad person." It intrigues me how people will quickly say, "Sure, I'm a sinner," but then resist the implications and insist, "But I'm a good person in God's eyes."

On the other hand, while some people think they're just fine...

2. *Some people think they're too dirty.* “Are you going to wash my feet, Jesus? No. I'm so messed up, it wouldn't help.”

Have you ever shared Christ with someone like that? “Come to church with you? No, I couldn't do that. Lightning would strike.”

I'm not sure what Peter was thinking. I don't think he's denying his feet are dirty, nor that they're too dirty to be cleansed. But it's unthinkable to him that Jesus would do the dirty work.

I think Peter thought he was being polite. To him, the nonsense had gone far enough. If none of the other men were going to say something, he would. How absurd that the Master would wash the feet of His followers! That was just out of line, and somebody had to put a stop to it.

We miss the emphasis in our English Bibles. In the original Greek text, the word “You” is in the emphatic position. The next word in the order is “my.” There's a sharp contrast. Literally, “Lord, are You my feet going to wash?” The *Living Bible* offers this paraphrase, “Master, you shouldn't be washing our feet like this!”

Notice verse 7, “Jesus replied, ‘You do not realize now what I am doing, but later you will understand.’” That's interesting. Jesus said that Peter wouldn't understand the significance of these actions until later. There's no amount of explanation that He could give now to help Peter.

That means that what Jesus is doing is more than an object lesson about serving. If that were the case, Peter and the others *could* grasp that, and they wouldn't need to wait.

So what was it that Peter didn't understand, and couldn't that night, yet later would? This. What Jesus did in that upper room foreshadowed what He was going to do the next day on the cross.

That brings us to Peter's second wrong view. Why did he challenge Christ's love? First, because he had a wrong view of himself. Second...

B. Peter exhibited a wrong view of Christ (8). Notice verse 8, “‘No,’ said Peter, ‘you shall never wash my feet.’”

Peter used what we would call bad grammar in verse 8, a double negative, telling Jesus literally, “My feet You will no never wash, unto eternity.”

I tend to think it was not so much his pride, but his *love* that prompted Peter to object. To Peter it was unthinkable that his beloved Master should engage in a menial task like foot-washing. He was too good for that.

And herein lies Peter's second misunderstanding. The Master is not too good to wash feet. Peter is not thinking rightly about the Christ.

Now watch Jesus' response in verse 8, “Jesus answered, ‘Unless I wash you, you have no part with me.’” From those words we learn two very important truths regarding Christ.

1. *Christ reaches out to dirty people.* “Unless I wash you,” says the Christ to Peter. That's why He came. Not to inspire good people, but to wash dirty people.⁸

And when it comes to washing, Christ takes the initiative. He reaches out. He approaches these men with dirty feet, and He takes their feet in His hands and makes them clean. But this isn't merely about dirty feet, which is why you won't understand until later, Peter.

⁸Merrell Tenney comments, “Divine love leaped over the boundaries of class distinctions and made the Lord of glory the servant of men.” p. 198.

Last week I started reading Bill O'Reilly's best seller, *Killing Jesus*.⁹ I'm intrigued by the author's intent for the book as stated in his preface (bold emphasis mine):

In the writing of this fact-based book, Martin Dugard and I do not aim to suggest that we know everything about Jesus. But we know much and will tell you things that you might not have heard...

This is not a religious book. We do not address Jesus as the Messiah, only as a man who galvanized a remote area of the Roman Empire and made very powerful enemies while **preaching a philosophy of peace and love**...

Martin Dugard and I are both Roman Catholics who were educated in religious schools. But we are also historical investigators and are **interested primarily in telling the truth about important people, not converting anyone to a spiritual cause**. We brought this dedication and discipline to Abraham Lincoln and John F. Kennedy, and in these pages we will do the same with Jesus of Nazareth...

Jesus was executed. But the incredible story behind **the lethal struggle between good and evil** has not been fully told. Until now. At least, that is the goal of this book.

I'm glad that people are reading a book that's causing them to think about Jesus, and specifically, about His death on the cross. But there's a danger in considering Jesus' death merely from a historical, educational perspective. The danger is linked to a second insight that comes from considering what Jesus told Peter, and it's this.

2. *To belong to Christ, a person must accept what Jesus offers.* "Unless I wash you, you have no part with me." So what happens if you know Jesus merely as a historical figure, like Lincoln or Kennedy? Or what happens if you know Him merely as someone who inspires you with His philosophy of peace and love? What did Jesus tell Peter?

"Unless I wash you, you have no part with me." *No part.* That's pretty strong language. What does it mean? What it means is that we need to give serious attention to Peter's third area of misunderstanding.

C. Peter exhibited a wrong view of cleansing (9-11). Notice verse 9, "Then, Lord," Simon Peter replied, "not just my feet but my hands and my head as well!"

Peter was a man of extremes. One minute he opposes a foot-washing. Now he asks for a shower!

What's Peter's problem? He's not thinking rightly about *cleansing*.

How did Jesus respond to his request? In verse 10, "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.'"

What's Jesus saying here? He seems to be describing a typical scene for a Jew, that of going to a holy feast. Before leaving his home, the person would bathe. Uncleanness disqualified a man from entering the holy place. So he would wash himself and then head for the feast. But on the way, something would inevitably happen. He would pick up dirt on his feet.

Sort of like swimming in a lake. Before you get to your shoes, what do you have all over your feet? Sand, dirt, sticks. So you need to rewash your feet.

⁹ O'Reilly, Bill; Dugard, Martin (2013-09-24). *Killing Jesus: A History* (Kindle Locations 55-56). Henry Holt and Co.. Kindle Edition.

So the man who's heading to the feast. Though clean when he left his home, by the time he arrived at his destination, his feet would be soiled by the dusty roads. He didn't need another bath. But he did need to have his feet washed. As the ESV puts it, "The one who has bathed does not need to wash, except for his feet, but is completely clean."

Then Jesus said something very personal to all the disciples. "And you are clean." *You*, that's plural. He's talking to the apostles, this team of men He selected and disciplined. You have already had a bath. You've already been cleansed.

Cleansed from what? From sin. By putting their trust in Him, these men have already experienced what Jesus came to provide, cleansing from sin.

So what's the point of this? Based on what Jesus told Peter in verse 10, we learn three important truths about cleansing.

1. *To become a follower of Christ, you need a bath.* What kind of bath? The kind Paul describes in Titus 3:4-7, "But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life."

There's what a bath is, the washing of rebirth, being saved, being justified by His grace. These are all synonymous with bath, and this is what must happen to become a true follower of Jesus.

Friends, don't miss what Jesus is saying here. Unless He, the Lamb of God, takes away your sin, you can have no part with Him.

And that's happened for you, says Jesus. *You are clean.* And, of course, it's what Jesus is going to endure the very next day that accomplishes this cleansing.

2. *If you are a follower of Christ, you need your feet washed.* Listen again to what Jesus said, "A person who has had a bath needs only to wash his feet." If you've had a spiritual bath, you don't need another one. You're saved once. You're justified once. You're cleansed by the blood of Christ once.

But you still sin, even as a Christian. Your feet still take you places at times you shouldn't go. So then what? What's needed? Another bath? No. You're still saved and justified. That hasn't changed. But you do need to wash your feet, that is, to get rid of the sin that's clinging to your life.

3. *It's possible to follow Christ and still be unclean.* Jesus concludes verse 10, "You are clean, though not every one of you." Why'd He say that? Verse 11 says, "For he knew who was going to betray him, and that was why he said not every one was clean."

Here's a sobering reality. It's possible to follow Jesus and still be unclean. Like Judas. Following Jesus, trying to live like Him, doesn't cleanse a person. Only faith in His finished cross-work can do that. So if a person tries to live like Jesus but refuses to accept Christ as his Savior, that person might look like a Jesus-follower to the naked eye, but he's still unclean.

Did you realize that Jesus washed Judas' feet? He did. But that foot washing did Judas no good because he had not been bathed all over.

Some people think that Judas was a saved man who sinned away his salvation. But listen to Jesus in John 6:64, "Yet there are some of you who do not believe." And then this comment by the writer, John, "For Jesus had known from the beginning which of them did not believe and who would betray him."

It's tragic, yet true. It's possible to act like you are clean, and not be clean, to put on a good front on the outside, and be filthy with sin on the inside.

We've seen three things regarding love thus far—love's context, love's communication, and love's challenge. There's one more, which we'll see, the Lord willing, next time. In verses 12-17 we're going to see love's commission, for if we have received Christ's cleansing, we have a responsibility.

That brings me to our second story. Earlier I told you about Mitsuo Fuchida. Now listen to the story of the man who wrote the tract that God used to help Fuchida see the cleansing power of Jesus.

Jacob DeShazer was raised in a Christian home in Salem, Oregon, but everybody knew he was a rebel. "He skipped school, thieved, and became bored with small-town life," writes Stephens.

So he joined the US Army Air Force. Eventually he volunteered for a dangerous assignment led by Lieutenant Colonel James Doolittle, and flew in the sixteenth and last aircraft and dropped his payload on Nagoya, about 300 miles south of Tokyo.

Having completed their mission, Doolittle's men didn't have enough fuel to return to the aircraft carrier, so they kept going into China. Eventually the fuel was gone and the pilot, Bill Farrow, gave the order, "We gotta jump."

DeShazer pulled the parachute cord and eventually landed hard in a Chinese cemetery, fracturing some ribs when he hit the ground. A few hours later he was captured by Japanese soldiers and tortured mercilessly. He would spend the next 3 ½ years in unthinkable circumstances.

DeShazer was not a religious man and was understandably filled with hate for the men who treated him so brutally. In 1944 a guard surprisingly gave him a Bible which had been confiscated from the home of a former missionary to China, and told DeShazzar he could read it for three weeks. In the leaflet *I Was a Prisoner of Japan*, DeShazzar tells what happened:

"I eagerly began to read its pages. Chapter after chapter gripped my heart. In due time I came to the books of the prophets, and found that their every writing seemed focused on a divine Redeemer from sin, one who was to be sent from heaven to be born in the form of a human babe. Their writings so fascinated me that I read them again and again until I had earnestly studied them through six times. Then I went on into the New Testament, and there read of the birth of Jesus Christ, the one who actually fulfilled the very prophecies of Isaiah, Jeremiah, Micah and the other Old Testament writers. My heart rejoiced as I found confirmed in Acts 10:43, 'To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name, whosoever believeth on him shall receive remission [forgiveness] of sins.' After I had carefully read this book of the Acts, I continued on into the study of the epistle Paul wrote to the Christians at Rome.

On June 8th, 1944, the words of Romans 10:9 stood out boldly before my eyes: 'If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.' In that very moment God gave me grace to confess my sins to him, and he forgave me and saved me for Jesus' sake, even as I later found that His Word...promises so clearly in 1 John 1:9: 'If we confess our sins, [God] is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.'

How my heart rejoiced in my newness of spiritual life, even though my body was suffering so terribly from the physical beatings and lack of food. But suddenly I discovered that God had given me new spiritual eyes, and that when I looked at the Japanese officers and guards who had starved and beaten me and my companions so cruelly, I found that my bitter hatred for them had changed to loving pity...I read in my Bible that while those who crucified Jesus on the cross had beaten him and spit upon him before he was nailed to the cross, he tenderly prayed in his moment of excruciating suffering, 'Father, forgive them for they know not what they do.' And now from the depths of my heart, I too prayed for God to forgive my torturers...¹⁰

After 40 months of incessant suffering, DeShazer and his three surviving fellow American prisoners were set free. That was 1945. In 1948, after months of healing, and a couple of years of Bible college education, DeShazer and his wife returned to Japan as missionaries of the gospel of Jesus Christ. He wrote a little pamphlet of the Doolittle Raid, what happened to the eight Americans who fell into Japanese hands, and how he had been transformed by the message of the Bible. Millions of copies of that leaflet were printed in Japanese and distributed in the post-war years. It was that leaflet with that story that fell, in God's providence, into the hands of Mitsuo Fuchida at a railway station in Tokyo in 1950. As mentioned earlier, Fuchida became a believer in Christ, and DeShazer and Fuchida became friends and co-laborers in Christ's army.

The DeShazers gave 30 years of their lives to Japan, proclaiming the good news of Jesus, and even planted a church in Nagoya, the place Jacob bombed in the Doolittle Raid.¹¹ DeShazer died in 2008 at the age of 95.

Make It Personal: We need to ask ourselves some questions.

1. *Am I thinking rightly about myself?* Peter wasn't and he resisted Jesus. How about you? Perhaps you think you don't need Jesus, or are too far gone for Jesus. No way. The Bible says you are a sinner, yes, and deserving of eternal judgment for your sin. But you are not too far gone for Him.

2. *Am I thinking rightly about Christ?* What do you think about Him? The Bible declares that He is the Son of God, the only Savior. Do you agree? Do you agree with His statement that "Unless I wash you, you have no part with me"?

3. *Am I thinking rightly about the cleansing work of Christ?* He says every person needs a bath. Do you agree? Have you experienced it? If so, do you believe what He says, that if you've put your trust in His atonement, you are now clean?

4. *Am I thinking rightly about the condition of my feet?* So what about your feet? Are they dirty because there's sin that needs to go?

¹⁰ Don Stephens, pp. 143-4.

¹¹ Ibid. p. 149.