

Pastor Daryl Diddle

Sermon Series: *Calm the Chaos 1*

To Love

October 22, 2023

### John 13:1-17 (NIV)

*It was just before the Passover Festival. Jesus knew that the hour had come for him to leave this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end.*

*<sup>2</sup> The evening meal was in progress, and the devil had already prompted Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot, to betray Jesus. <sup>3</sup> Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under his power, and that he had come from God and was returning to God; <sup>4</sup> so he got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist. <sup>5</sup> 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.*

*<sup>6</sup> He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, "Lord, are you going to wash my feet?"*

*<sup>7</sup> Jesus replied, "You do not realize now what I am doing, but later you will understand."*

*<sup>8</sup> "No," said Peter, "you shall never wash my feet."*

*Jesus answered, "Unless I wash you, you have no part with me."*

*<sup>9</sup> "Then, Lord," Simon Peter replied, "not just my feet but my hands and my head as well!"*

*<sup>10</sup> Jesus answered, "Those who have had a bath need only to wash their feet; their whole body is clean. And you are clean, though not every one of you." <sup>11</sup> For he knew who was going to betray him, and that was why he said not every one was clean.*

*<sup>12</sup> 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. <sup>13</sup> "You call me 'Teacher' and 'Lord,' and rightly so, for that is what I am. <sup>14</sup> Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. <sup>15</sup> I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. <sup>16</sup> Very truly I tell you, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. <sup>17</sup> Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them.*

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Would you take a Bible and turn back to the gospel of John, Chapter 13? John 13: this is the account of Jesus washing the feet of His disciples.

Dry weather, dry throat: had to drink lots of water.

[Hold up plastic bottle of water.]

Tired of water, so I've gotten these at Bargain Hunt.

[Hold up small squeeze bottle to add tea flavoring to the water. Add flavoring to water bottle. Smell.]

That's not tea! That's [smell], that's mustard in there!

That's why it was at Bargain Hunt: someone put something in there that isn't supposed to be...

Regardless of what the label says, you can't tell what's inside until you squeeze it out.

The same is true, by and large, about us.

We are taught, from an early age, to be careful with what we reveal about ourselves to other people. So, we live our lives developing these filters — cloaks. We build walls to keep others from seeing what's really inside our minds and hearts.

How, then, can you tell what's truly inside a person?

About the only way is by what comes out in times of chaos, times of pressure [hold up the flavoring bottle] — the times when life squeezes us.

In introducing this event that John records, William Barclay writes, "There are few incidents in the gospels which reveal, better than this, the character of Jesus and the extent of His love." And Barclay is absolutely right. If you want to really understand Jesus (who He is, what motivated Him, how He saw life), this is where you look, right here.

I mean, put yourself in the place of Jesus. Imagine a little bit here with me.

Pull together in your mind the faces of those with whom you work closest; imagine those with whom you go to school. Collect in your mind the faces of your closest neighbors, your closest friends. You know who they are.

Do you have them pictured up here? [Point to head.]

OK, then imagine having them gathered around you and sitting down, and imagine yourself stooping in front of them with a towel and a basin of warm water. You move slowly from one to the next, first removing their shoes (and in our day, likely their socks also,) and then you wash their feet, you dry them, you put their socks and shoes back on them. And then you move on to the next in the circle.

It takes a while to do this for all of them, so everyone there has plenty of time to watch and to think about what's happening, about what you're doing.

Can you imagine doing that?

But let's go further.

Imagine kneeling before someone who has slandered you, who has lied about you. Someone who you've learned is planning, in fact, to betray you in the worst of ways just a few hours from now. Imagine kneeling before him or her and washing their feet.

Can you imagine doing this?

This is the servanthood of Jesus.

Imagine doing this for those seated around you, in your row, right here this morning. Look into their eyes, if you dare...

This is all rather uncomfortable for us to consider, isn't it?

In our heart of hearts, we find it difficult to imagine ourselves as either the washer or the "washee."

In fact, I'd imagine the larger number of us are so uncomfortable right now considering this that you're secretly *hoping* — maybe even *praying* — that I'm not leading us up to a surprise foot-washing service here this morning.

We're not going to do that, so you can relax, but not too much. Because, according to Jesus, everyone who follows Him has to deal honestly with that latent resistance within us toward humbling ourselves and serving others to the degree that Jesus does right here.

What is it in us that *resists* this sort of humility?

And what was it in *Jesus* that *embraced* it—and in this moment of His life, of all times? As His enemies gathered around Him, and His suffering on the cross drew nearer and nearer?

How do we love like this, like Jesus—and especially in times of chaos, [hold up flavoring bottle] especially when life squeezes us?

Those are the questions I want us to answer today.

Let's take the first one first: "What is it in us that resists this sort of humility?"

The answer is simple: pride.

Pride is the cause: the cause of the fall in Eden and the cause of every non-Christlike thought ever since.

To put it in computer terms, because of and ever since the fall, pride is the *default operating system* of every person. We were born with a bug in how we think; we don't think as God thinks, which is why we sin, and why we need Jesus' forgiveness and salvation.

You see it here, displayed by Peter.

Now, some of us are able to cloak our responses so they aren't revealed so blatantly. There are some here with smiles on our faces, as though we would welcome a foot-washing service. But secretly, inwardly, we're thinking, "Oh I hope he doesn't go there."

Some of us are very good at disguising our true inner responses.

And others aren't; they just let it out honestly.

The latter: that was Peter.

He responded in pride to what Jesus was doing.

Not intentionally or maliciously; no, not at all. It was just the natural response of Peter's operating system—which comes out particularly in moments of crisis or chaos.

Those around see [hold up flavoring bottle] what's really inside someone when life squeezes them.

Jesus kneels in front of Peter, dressed as a slave, of all things.

But to Peter, this wasn't proper! Only a *slave* would wash the feet of a guest. And some Jews believed that only a *gentile* slave should do it. So, that Jesus, of all people, would literally *stoop* to do this, Peter, thinking as the world thinks, had no category for it.

The fact is, Jesus, in thinking as God thinks, was reversing the whole, fallen social order here. He was actually fulfilling and demonstrating the things He'd been saying all along.

Jesus told His disciples, "*I am among you as one who serves.*"<sup>1</sup>

You see, those aren't just words to Jesus. His life backs them up.

Jesus, here, is illustrating Paul's later words to the Philippians about how "*Jesus... made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant...*"<sup>2</sup>

You see, *this* is thinking as God thinks.

But Peter was still thinking as the world thinks. He was still standing on his dignity.

We see it in two shocked responses: the first in verse 6 there, where Peter exclaims, "*Lord, you... my feet?!*"

In the Greek, the words "you" and "my" are side by side, an indication of Peter's shock and exasperation.

And then the second in verse 8 when Peter digs in further, "*You will never!*"

But you see, all this is hanging on to pride, holding on to propriety and personal dignity. And Jesus not only says, but demonstrates, that all has to go in order to ever truly align with Him.

Jesus had to bring Peter—just as He has to bring *everyone* who will follow Him—to the realization that *nothing is beneath our dignity*. That's why Jesus' response here is as forceful as Peter's protest. There in verse 8, Jesus replies to Peter, "*then you have no place with me.*"

You see, there is no salvation without God's sort of humility.

So, what is it in us that resists Jesus' sort of humility?

It's pride: the vestiges of that operating system that became a part of us at the fall. And, friends, in order to follow Jesus, it simply has to go.

So then the second question: what was it in Jesus that allowed for this sort of humility, that allowed Him to love like this, to wash the feet of even the one who would condemn Him?

To love them, as verse 1 says, "*to this fullest extent?*"

And especially in this moment of His life—in this time of great chaos that He was facing? [flavoring bottle]

How was it that it was love that came out of Jesus when He was squeezed by the world?

The short answer is, Jesus had the mind and heart of God.

His life was not ordered by the world's sinful—you might say "bug-infested"—operating system. Jesus' life was ordered by God's good, perfect, sinless operating system.

You say, "Really? There's an operating system out there that's truly bug-free?"

Yes, there is!

Not in our computers or phones, but here, in our hearts, and in our heads, and in our eyes.

For the way we feel and think and see, God has a new operating system that He wants to install in us—the very one Jesus uses.

That's the ongoing work of the Holy Spirit—the Spirit of Jesus in the world today—in the lives of those who follow Him.

God's Spirit does *for* us and *in* us just what Jesus did for Peter there in that moment: He confronts us, lovingly but firmly, with the vestiges of pride that remain in us, and He offers to remove them: to replace pride with love, dignity with servanthood, arrogance with humility, position with meekness.

<sup>1</sup> Luke 22:27

<sup>2</sup> Philippians 2:6-7

And you know, His work in those ways is most powerful and effective in life's most chaotic moments [flavoring bottle], when the world is squeezing us.

We grow the most in the hardest of times.

But you know, all this talk of the Spirit giving us the mind of Christ, that's not just foggy, theoretical chatter. The mind of Christ establishes in us the certainty of very practical realities, which give us the ability to love in even chaotic times.

You can put a finger on the ways God's mind changes our perspective, because having God's operating system assures us of the very same things that Jesus was assured of—so that we have, as Jesus had, firm places to stand and so the world's chaos doesn't affect our response of love toward others.

Nothing is more important in chaotic times than having firm places to stand, and God's transforming work provide those.

Let me just quickly mention three of them that we see here in Jesus.

*First*, when you're living by God's operating system, *you know who you are*.

Jesus knew who He was. Jesus knew that He was the beloved son of God, so He did not need the approval of the world for His own self-worth.

When you know you're a child of God, the opinions of the world, the honors of the world, the dignities of the world, the things that so many people chase after today: all of those just fall away. And that clears the path for us to love others, even enemies, selflessly—without the requirement of being loved back.

There is *no* worldly status or honor, no amount of "clicks" or "likes," that compares with being a child of God.

So even in chaotic times, Jesus knew that His identity didn't change. He knew who He was, and so standing on that firm ground, He was able to love.

And so can we—even in chaotic times.

*Second*, when we have the mind of God, we *know*, just as Jesus knew, *where we are going*.

Even in the worst of times.

Verse one there, *"Jesus knew that the time had come for Him to leave this world and go to the Father."*

Then again at the end of verse three there, *"Jesus... knew that He was returning to God."*

*Regardless* of what was coming in the short term, His *destination* was God His Father. The certainty and security of that fact freed Jesus, and it frees all who *follow* Jesus, from the intimidation and fear of the world's opinions, the world's criticisms, the world's rejection and abuse and anything else we may face here.

And then, beyond all that, it also frees us, ultimately, from the fear of death.

To know that in Christ, whatever the world may do, it cannot harm us. People cannot harm us. Circumstances cannot harm us in any real, lasting way.

Not to have to wonder where we're headed and to know that when our days here are done, we are going to God our Father: to *know* that *frees* and *empowers* us to live lives of love, *above* the chaos, just as Jesus did—even when the world squeezes us. [flavoring bottle]

*And then third*, when we operate, when we live according to God's mind and heart, *we know who is in charge*.

Now, you might imagine, and rightly so, that what I mean by this is that Jesus knew God the Father is sovereign, that He's all powerful.

As we hear people say so often today, "God's got this."

And that's true; Jesus was utterly confident in God's *omnipotence*; God's *authority* and *supremacy* and *control*. That is part of God's operating system that He wants to install in us.

But you know, that's not all.

Beyond that, verse three there tells us that Jesus also knew, *"That God the Father had put all things under His power."*

Jesus knew that He, Himself, had authority given by God to speak boldly and confidently to the chaos around Him.

That's how He could tell the storm to be still, and the demon to be gone, and the sick to be well and the devil to be defeated.

And remember, Jesus said that those who follow Him would do greater things than even that which He did.<sup>3</sup>

Now, I'm not saying that we are, in the same way as Jesus was, in charge of all things. He is the King of Kings—we are not.

But I am saying that, in Jesus, we, as children of God, have far more authority and power than we typically think. At the very least, we have power over our responses, our attitudes, and over the spirits of chaos that worm their way into our lives intending to disrupt our peace and throw us into worry and fear and despondency.

We can tell them to be gone, because in Christ we belong to God; we are His children; we are on our way to Him; and we need not be held captive by that which has no real power over us.

But even beyond this, the enemy has no power, has no authority over us, because we have been delivered from His kingdom of darkness.

We are children of light.

God has given us authority to overcome all the power of the enemy.<sup>4</sup> God Himself is our refuge, and the joy of the Lord is our strength.

When we operate according to God's mind and heart, even when chaos comes, understanding, just as Jesus did, *who is really in charge*: that steadies us and frees us to love [squeeze flavoring bottle]—even when the world squeezes us.

<sup>3</sup> John 14:12

<sup>4</sup> Luke 10:19

You know, in Luke's account of this very event, he reports to us that the disciples were arguing among themselves as to who was the greatest of them.<sup>5</sup>

Friends, the very same happens today.

There are many in Christ's Church who are standing on their dignity when they ought to be kneeling in service to others, but they fear that level of humility, they fear the vulnerability of loving because:

- they do not really know who they are as children of God,
- they're not convinced that they are truly going to the Father,
- and they don't understand the extent of either God's or their own authority and power over their circumstances.

And that's tragic and sad, because in times of chaos, when life really squeezes us, they waver with the world instead of standing on Christ's firm ground.

Listen, maybe in a small way – or maybe in a big way – do you find that to be true in your life?

It doesn't have to be.

Jesus offers us all firm ground today. He wants us to know who we are, where we're going, and who's really in charge in our world.

God's Spirit wants, today, to help us and teach us and assure us, so that even when we're squeezed by the world, the character of Christ comes out of us so the chaos can be calmed and we can be free to live as Jesus: to serve each other, and to be God's steadying, calming, loving, serving presence in this chaotic, unstable world.

Do you need God's help with this today?

Do you need God's assurance of *who you are, where you're going*, and *who's in charge*?

Do you need the power to love that comes with the humility of Christ?

To face our world's challenges, do you need a divine update to your operating system?

If you do – if you find yourself feeling shaky today and unable to love, come and ask Jesus to give you just what you need. He knows and He wants to provide to all of us just what we need to find firm ground in this crazy, unstable world.

Prayer:

Father, it's true: we don't really know what tomorrow holds, but we do know that You hold tomorrow. So would You come alongside any here today who, as the world squeezes them, find fear in their hearts. Would you meet them; meet us all, and give us all You gave to Jesus, so we can be calm in chaos – and free to love.

Closing Song: *A Shelter in the Time of Storm*, vv.1-4

Benediction:

Friends, when we're tempted to think of our dignity, our prestige, our place, our rights, we need to remember this passage – this image of the Son of God wrapped in a towel, kneeling at His disciples' feet.

This is who Jesus calls us to be and who we can be: in complete peace, with the mind and heart of Christ reminding us who we are, where we're going and who's in charge in this chaotic world.

Seek and receive His mind and heart today, so we can love in humility and assurance and confidence.

*All material may be freely used where needed and helpful, but in the interest of integrity, please note the source.*

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<sup>5</sup> Luke 22:24