

Grow Groups Resources

- **Sermon Summary: Picture of Grace / John 13:1-17**

- John 13 marks a major transition in the Gospel—from Jesus' public ministry (the "Book of Signs") to His private teaching and journey toward the cross (the "Book of Glory"). As Jesus gathers with His disciples before the Passover, He gives them more than teaching—He gives them a living picture of grace through the act of washing their feet.

• **Picture of Grace**

- Rather than simply explaining His mission, Jesus demonstrates it. Like a visual illustration, His actions communicate what words alone cannot. In the ancient world, where many were illiterate, physical acts like this carried deep meaning—similar to how symbols like communion or baptism communicate the gospel.
- Jesus, knowing that His time had come and that He had all authority from the Father, does something shocking: He takes the role of the lowest servant. He removes His outer garment, wraps Himself in a towel, and begins washing His disciples' feet—dirty from walking dusty roads in sandals.
- This act is deeply symbolic. The one who holds all authority humbles Himself to serve. The one who is Lord becomes a servant. Even more striking, Jesus washes the feet of every disciple, including Judas, who is already planning to betray Him. This reveals the depth of Jesus' love—He serves even those who reject Him.
- The imagery points directly to the cross:
 - Just as Jesus laid aside His garment, He laid aside His heavenly glory to become human.
 - Just as the towel becomes dirty, Jesus takes on the sin and shame of humanity.
 - Just as He cleanses their feet, He alone can cleanse us from sin.

This is grace: undeserved, sacrificial love given freely.

• **Embrace Grace**

- When Jesus comes to Peter, Peter resists. He is uncomfortable with the idea of his Lord serving him in such a humble way. His reaction reflects a common human struggle—we resist grace because it challenges our pride.
- Jesus responds firmly: "Unless I wash you, you have no part with me." In other words, unless we allow Jesus to serve us and cleanse us, we cannot belong to Him.

- This reveals a crucial truth: salvation is not something we earn or achieve. We cannot clean ourselves up before coming to God. Instead, we must humbly receive what Jesus has already done.
- Peter’s shift—from refusal to over-acceptance (“wash all of me!”)—shows how easily we misunderstand grace. Jesus clarifies that His cleansing work is sufficient. What matters is not our effort, but our willingness to receive.
- This section emphasizes that:
 - Grace must be **accepted**, not resisted
 - Pride prevents us from receiving what only Jesus can give
 - Salvation is entirely the work of Christ
- **Extend Grace**
 - After washing their feet, Jesus explains the meaning of His actions. He tells His disciples that if He, their Lord and Teacher, has served them in this way, they should do the same for others.
 - This command is both practical and symbolic. While foot washing may not always be literal today, it represents a lifestyle of humble service. Jesus calls His followers to:
 - Take the lowest place
 - Do unnoticed or undesirable tasks
 - Put others’ needs ahead of their own
 - The sermon highlights that serving others flows from first experiencing Christ’s love. We do not serve to earn God’s favor; we serve because we have already received it.
 - A powerful example shared is of a man who gave up his career to care for his wife with Alzheimer’s. His sacrifice was not rooted in obligation alone, but in love—reflecting the kind of self-giving grace that Jesus models.

- **A Call to Reflect and Respond**

Ultimately, this passage invites us into three responses:

1. **See grace clearly** – Recognize the depth of Jesus’ humility and love
2. **Embrace grace personally** – Accept that only Jesus can cleanse and save
3. **Extend grace outwardly** – Serve others with the same humility and love

Jesus doesn’t just teach about love—He embodies it. His washing of the disciples’ feet is a preview of the cross, where He would ultimately serve humanity by giving His life.

- Discussion Questions

1. Have someone start your discussion time with a word of prayer.
2. Slowly read John 13:1-17 out loud.
 1. What questions arise as you hear the text? What stands out?
 2. How does the background of Judas' upcoming betrayal colour the overall story?
3. Thinking about the entire Bible, what other pictures, or physical representations, has God used to express spiritual truths? (Ex. Jesus washes His disciples' feet to reveal who He is and how we can respond.)
4. Picture of Grace
 1. Jesus takes the position of a servant, wears a towel, and washes the disciples' feet. What does this imagery reveal about the very heart and mission of Jesus?
 2. The towel that Jesus wears in the story is mentioned twice. As you consider the towel, what does it speak about our sin, life in the world, Jesus' cleansing, and what Jesus has done with our sin and shame?
5. Embrace Grace
 1. Peter initially resists Jesus' offer to wash His feet. Why do some people struggle to receive the work that Jesus has accomplished for them? What might it look like today for someone to resist accepting Jesus' gift of grace?
6. Extend Grace
 1. Why do you think the church, in a broad sense, has stopped the literal practice of washing feet? Do you think that there may be a better cultural expression that would convey the same truths?
 2. Have you ever been part of a foot washing? What was it like? Did you give or receive the washing?
 3. Foot washing is a symbolic act of self-giving services to others. What ways can you serve the people around you in a humble way? What stories of this type of service have inspired you?
7. Close your time in prayer. Consider if your group would want to take part in a foot washing service this Sunday after church.