

John: The Water of Life

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[0 : 0 0] this morning is from John chapter 13, beginning at verse 1, which has been found on page 1081 of the Bibles in front of you.

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.

The evening meal was in progress and the devil had already prompted Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot, to betray Jesus. Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under his power and that he had come from God and was returning to God. So he got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing and wrapped a towel around his waist. After that, he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples' feet, drying them with a towel that was wrapped around him. He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, Lord, are you going to wash my feet? Jesus replied, you do not realize now what I am doing, but later you will understand. No, said Peter, you shall never wash my feet. Jesus answered, unless I wash you, you have no part with me. Then Lord, Simon Peter replied, not just my feet, but my hands and my head as well. 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. For he knew who was going to betray him, and that is why he said not everyone was clean. When he'd finished washing their feet, he put on his clothes and returned to his place. Do you understand what I've done for you?

He asked them. 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. Very truly, I tell you, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them. I'm not referring to all of you. I know those I have chosen.

But this is to fulfill this passage of scripture. He who shared my bread has turned against me. I am telling you now before it happens, so that when it does happen, you will believe that I am who I am.

[2 : 2 8] Very truly, I tell you, whoever accepts anyone I send, accepts me. And whoever accepts me, accepts the one who sent me. After he said this, Jesus was troubled in spirit and testified, very truly, I tell you, one of you is going to betray me. His disciples stared at one another at a loss to know which of them he meant. One of them, the disciple whom Jesus loved, was reclining next to him. Simon Peter motioned to this disciple and said, ask him which one he means. Leaning back against Jesus, he asked him, Lord, who is it? Jesus answered, it is the one to whom I will give this piece of bread, which I, when I have dipped it in the dish. Then dipping the piece of bread, he gave it to Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot. As soon as Judas took the bread, Satan entered him. Jesus told him, what you are about to do, do quickly. But no one at the meal understood why Jesus said this to him.

Since Judas had charged with the money, some thought Jesus was telling him to buy what was needed for the festival or to give something to the poor. As soon as Judas had taken the bread, he went out and it was night. This is the word of the Lord.

Thank you so much. It's great to be here and a real privilege to be visiting and opening up the word. I'm so encouraged by what God has done at St. Silas over the last little while and the leadership of Martin and Amy and Jonathan and the rest of the team. It's so, so wonderful and it's a great privilege to be opening up the word. Why don't we pray as we come to meet God in the words of Scripture?

Heavenly Father, we thank you that you are a God who speaks. You haven't left us by ourselves to work out who you are. You've given us your word.

And so, Father, we pray that as we come to the words of John 13 this morning, that you would speak to us. And that we might see Jesus so clearly and love him more, that we might be moulded and shaped to be his people.

[4 : 40] We pray that in his name. Amen. Where I come from, Christmas looks quite different. One, it comes to December and you guys are in a world of cold and perhaps snow, but at least grey and a little bit of miserable.

Aussie kids grow up with modified Christmas songs. So, you know, dashing through the snow when you sing jingle bells. Aussie kids grow up with a modified version, goes a bit like this.

Dashing through the scrub in a rusty Holden ute, kicking up the dust, esky in the boot. Kelpie by my side, singing Christmas songs. It's summertime and I am in my singlet shorts and thongs.

Jingle bells and on it goes. Now, some of that will be complete nonsense to you, which is the point, right? Because it's an Australian version of it. Let me just clarify. When we talk about thongs, that's talking about footwear, not underwear.

But this is different, right? Christmas is different. And to be honest, having lived here for a couple of years earlier in my life, I'm a bit torn as to whether Christmas is better here or better back in Sydney.

[5 : 45] But for all the differences that there is between Christmas in Scotland and Christmas in Sydney, I reckon there's one area of Christmas where it's exactly the same.

And that is when it comes to the way your family interacts around the dinner table at your extended family Christmas dinner, right?

The time where you've got to pretend that you all like each other and that you all get on. Because this is what it was like for me growing up. If there was a camera at our Christmas dinner, the camera would just sort of notice a fairly normal meal.

And even the kids who are around, they don't understand the full context of it. Like for the kids, Christmas is just double dessert and presents. But as you become an adult, you realize there's a reason why those two uncles always sit at the opposite end of the table to one another.

Because you've just got to keep the peace. And you know that when Grandpa offers you the chocolates, he's just been gifted to accept one because he thinks he might have been poisoned. So you reassure him with that way.

[6 : 49] And then, you know, Grandma, she's a teetotaler. She doesn't drink alcohol all year. But she makes the brandy sauce for Christmas. And that's her one time of the year to splurge. But you just let it slide because you've got to let these things happen.

And all of these things are going on. Like to the outsider perspective, it looks like a normal meal. But you know that inside, it's a world of mixed motives, calculated decisions, and a hope that everything's just going to turn out okay.

In our passage this morning, we see a meal take place in John 13. And to the innocent bystander, it looks like a normal first century Passover meal. But what John does is he takes us inside the mind and the hearts of the key players around the table.

And we see actually that there's far more going on. So what we're going to do this morning is, like a documentary camera, we'll look at something from different vantage points to assess all that's going on.

That's what we're going to do. We're going to look at this meal from the perspective of Judas, Peter, the devil, and Jesus. And as we do that, as we look at this meal from those four different vantage points, we're going to see, God willing, that Jesus holds all things together.

[8 : 10] Let's jump in. Judas is the first perspective that we're going to have with our documentary camera. It's Thursday night in John 13. John's Gospel has been sort of moving at a pretty quick pace until this point.

And then chapters 13 to 17 all focus in on Thursday night. Tomorrow, Jesus is going to hang on a cross.

One of the disciples around the meal is Judas. Have a look at chapter 13, verse 1. 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 who loved them to the end.

The evening meal was in progress, and the devil had already prompted Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot, to betray Jesus.

I happen to be a fan of the Central Coast Mariners. They're a football team in Australia, in the A-League, Australia's national competition. The Central Coast is just north of Sydney. And the arch rivals of the Central Coast Mariners are the Newcastle Jets.

[9 : 19] They're an hour north up the highway. That's a local derby in Australia. And I just happened to find myself in the Away Supporters Bay in Newcastle with my fellow Central Coast Mariners fans on a Friday night about 10 years ago.

And the Central Coast, we were doing well. We were 1-0 up. We just ticked over 90 minutes. We were into injury time. And then there was one guy who played for Newcastle, who used to play for the Central Coast.

And he scored the equalising goal in the 92nd minute. And the rest of the stadium erupts. And we're just silent. And then he just so happens to find his way to be right in front of us as the Away Bay.

And he starts celebrating and gesticulating wildly as he celebrates this feat of his to steal the points from us. And in that instant, there were 200 drunken Australians who started pointing at him and chanting, Judas, Judas, Judas, Judas.

Judas. Never before have I been so impressed by the biblical literacy of a football crowd. But isn't it interesting that all the words in the English language that they could choose to describe that moment, they chose Judas because Judas is someone who we know.

[10 : 41] Judas equals traitor. But in verse 2 of John 13, that hasn't happened yet. How does it happen?

Verse 2, the evening meal was in progress and the devil had already prompted Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot, to betray Jesus. So at this meal, while everyone's engaged in conversation and doing their thing, Judas is thinking about betraying Jesus.

And he's thinking about betraying Jesus for 19 verses until verse 21, where Jesus anticipates what's going to happen.

Verse 21, Jesus says, Jesus was troubled in spirit and testified, very truly I tell you, one of you is going to betray me. And you can imagine Judas in that moment as he hears those words on the lips of Jesus.

Does he know what I've been thinking about? Does he know? Verse 26, Jesus answered, it is the one to whom I will give this piece of bread when I've dipped it in the dish.

[11 : 57] Then dipping the piece of bread, he gave it to Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot. And Judas has got a decision to make. He's not yet a traitor. But do I take the bread?

Do I not take the bread? It's his decision to make. In Genesis 4, God says to Cain, before he murders his brother Abel, he says, sin is crouching at your door.

It desires to have you, but you must rule over it. In the next verse, Cain murders Abel. Do I take the bread? Do I not take the bread?

Verse 27, look at it in your Bibles. As soon as Judas took the bread, Satan entered into him. So Jesus told him, what you're about to do, do quickly.

You know, there are times in the Bible we'll talk about God hardening the hearts of those who are opposed to his purposes for his people. And this is what we see going on here. Verse 2 literally says the devil had already put into the heart of Judas to betray Jesus.

[13 : 07] So the desire is already there. Then Jesus' words in verse 27 reinforce him in his conviction. This is what he's going to do. But it's his call. Let me encourage you, brothers and sisters, when Judas sat down for dinner that night, he could have decided not to do this.

He had the opportunity to confess his temptation to Jesus. He had the opportunity to ask Jesus to save him from this. But he decided not to.

And by mourning, he has committed the sin that literally destroys his life. Just because Satan entered into him doesn't mean we should feel sorry for him.

It's Judas who has acted. It's Judas who has made this decision. In the same way that you and I make decisions today, sin moves quickly and destructively in our lives.

So I urge you this morning, don't play around with it. Don't take it lightly. Don't think that your sin doesn't matter. Here's the thing, Judas didn't dislike Jesus. He hung out with him for years.

[14 : 17] He was just hungry for a little more money. A slightly higher status. The approval of his acquaintances, his new friends.

So John 13 tells us this story. The desires of the human heart are deceitful. And even when the light of the world is standing in front of us, left to our own devices, we will choose darkness.

That's what it says. Verse 30, have a look at it. As soon as Judas had taken the bread, he went out. And it was night. Judas loved darkness.

It was a love affair that in some ways was gradual, but then decisively swift in his life. A love affair that pulled him away from his Saviour. My encouragement to you, don't play around with sin.

You probably know instantaneously, because we all do, I know, you know instantaneously what the sin is that you're most easily tempted to. Don't allow yourself to be complacent with it.

[15 : 28] It will only lead to darkness. So that's Judas at the meal. The documentary camera, it's seen things from his perspective, and now it zooms out. We're going to go around 90 degrees.

We're going to look at Peter to see what's going on there. With Peter, our first interaction comes when Jesus begins to wash the disciples' feet. Have a look at verse 6. He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, Lord, are you going to wash my feet?

This is something that the lowest servant would do. On the feet were all kinds of unclean things. You're walking around in first century Palestine, you're going to get all kinds of things on your feet, including, you know, animal feces and things that make you ceremonially unclean.

Like, it's not just the yuck factor. It's also that this is a religiously inappropriate thing for Jesus to be doing at the meal. And so Peter says, no, verse 8, you shall never wash my feet.

And Jesus answered, unless I wash you, you have no part with me. Well then, Lord, Simon Peter replied, not just my feet, but my hands and my head as well. Peter probably feels like he's saved himself for that second answer.

[16 : 43] You know, Jesus didn't like the first answer, so we'll swing the pendulum completely to the other way, a bit of rhetorical flair, and I've done all right there, Peter probably thinks. If Peter stopped to reflect, which he struggled to do, but if he stopped to reflect, he would realize, I have no idea why Jesus is washing my feet.

In verse 7, Jesus had said, you do not realize now what I am doing, but later you will understand. He hears Jesus talk about understanding again in verse 12.

When he'd 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, 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.

But evidently, Peter doesn't get this. He's not washing anyone's feet anytime soon. He just doesn't understand that he needs to be washed by Jesus.

[17 : 54] And we know Peter doesn't get it because while Judas betrayed Jesus on the Thursday night, Peter disowns him too. Three times before the rooster crows at dawn, when the light of the world was being interrogated all by himself, Peter was denying him by the light of the fire.

And yet, Peter's story ends up very different to Judas' story. Why is that? You know this, like, you know, while Judas was, his story ends up in tragedy, ostracized from his God, from his Saviour, Peter, he goes on to serve the church boldly as a martyr.

I'm sorry, boldly until he dies as a martyr. Why the difference? John presents this episode, I think, to tell us that the reason why they end up different is because Jesus washes Peter specifically.

in Luke's Gospel, at this same moment, Jesus tells Simon Peter, using his full name, he says, Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift all of you as wheat, like all the disciples, but I have prayed for you, Simon, individually, that your faith may not fail.

Jesus prays for Peter specifically at this meal and Jesus washes Peter specifically as we read it in John. It is only Jesus' specific, interceding work that saves Peter from the same fate as Judas.

[19 : 35] Judas. You see, in John's Gospel, this is part of our words of comfort in the liturgy before, but we know, John 3, 16, God has a general love for the world.

For God so loved the world that he sent his one and only Son. In addition to that, Jesus has a specific love for those who are given to him, to those who are his own.

And this love is different, it's fuller, it's richer, and it will accomplish its purpose. Have a look with me at verse 1. I want you to see this in your scriptures because we've got to read this carefully.

Verse 1, the second half of it. Having loved his own who were in the world, right, no, it uses the same word as John 3, 16, the world, but the love that's in focus here is Jesus' love to his own who were in the world.

So general love for the world, specific, powerful love for his own. Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end.

[20 : 51] And he shows this love by washing them. Now as you've worked through John's Gospel in this series, you've been thinking about some of the different ways where water pops up and you've got many, many passages to choose from.

Jesus turning water into wine, the woman at the well, the Spirit flowing from within God's people like rivers of living water. And when these passages come up, as you've seen, there's an extra layer that John wants us to understand.

You see, Peter is indignant about the idea of Jesus washing his feet, but Jesus is saying to Peter, you need to be washed by me. You need to be washed by me. No, it's not just about getting every scrap of dirt off your feet.

Yes, it's an example of servanthood, but it's more than that. You need to be washed by me. And to help us understand what's going on with this theme of washing, we can look to the one other place in John's Gospel where washing occurs.

It comes in John 9 with the man who's born blind. In his words, what happens, John 9, 11, he says, the man they called Jesus made some mud and put it on my eyes.

[22 : 06] He told me to go to Siloam and wash. So I went and washed and then I could see. And the Pharisees are like interrogating this man, right? And they're trying to, because they don't like the fact that he's giving credit to Jesus for this.

And all he can say is, look, this is what happened. I washed and now I see. For him, it's impossible to disconnect washing, seeing, and trusting Jesus.

Those three things come together. As we are washed by Jesus, we're given new eyes to see and we follow him as our Lord. And so back in chapter 13, when Jesus is saying to Peter that he needs to be washed by Jesus, he's talking about a moment of salvation and transformation.

Jesus is going to save Peter by washing him of his sins. He's going to allow Peter to see the truth and this is going to transform Peter by the power of the Spirit into the early church pioneering, gospel proclaiming, prison bearing leader of the church that God intends him to be.

But he's none of these things yet in John 13. And that's an indication to us that the true washing will take place tomorrow at the cross.

[23 : 34] It's at the cross where Jesus holds onto those whom the Father has given him as his own possession. Like a shepherd looks after sheep, like a vine nourishes branches, Jesus washes his own.

And so as you walk out of church today, know this, if Jesus is your king, then this specific saving love, this washing love, is as true for you as it is for Peter.

He loves you as an individual. He holds all things together for you. Judas loved darkness.

Peter was washed by Jesus. And the difference between those two around the table is stark, but actually there's an even bigger battle going on.

There's a cosmic battle going on around the table. The camera draws back again. Let us consider the devil.

[24 : 57] Because by the end of this meal, the devil, he thinks he's won. He's caused the death of Jesus. He successfully tempted Judas. He prompted Judas subtly.

He laid the sin before him. He was crouching at his door. And then he seizes the opportunity when Judas takes the bread and he's got Judas in his grip. He leads him into the night. He will ensure that Judas hands Jesus over to the soldiers and to the Pharisees for his trial and his execution.

But there's something very important to know about the devil as we sit here today. He is mighty powerful but he's not most powerful.

He is mighty powerful but he's not most powerful. And in cases we talk about the devil, it's sort of something that causes a bit of uncertainty for you or discomfort or you're nervous or there's a bit of like spiritual anxiety that pops up from that.

I want you to see how closely verse 3 follows on from verse 2. Look at this. Verse 2, the evening meal was in progress. We've read this. The devil had already prompted Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot, to betray Jesus.

[26 : 13] So the devil's at work. He's doing his thing. Verse 3, the very next word. Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under his power and that he had come from God and was returning to God.

You see, the devil is mighty powerful but he is not most powerful. All things are under Jesus' power. And the devil thinks that he's won because he's caused Jesus' death.

Jesus knew it was happening. He knew he had come from God and was returning to God. He knew the devil was going to tempt Judas because the devil had to ask permission for him to sift all the disciples as wheat.

Jesus knew Judas would betray him. He knew he was one night away from hanging on a Roman cross. Verse 1, he knew that the hour had come for him to leave this world.

The devil is mighty powerful but he is not most powerful. He's at work in 2024. 2024. We would be foolish to be ignorant of this.

[27 : 18] He's at work in the west end of Glasgow in 2024 but he isn't in control. Jesus is. Jesus holds all things together so we need not be scared.

We need to trust Jesus actively. He's the last character around the table. for my family when I was growing up when it came to Christmas dinner and the extended family meal it was my grandma who was like the glue of the family.

There was so much respect and there was so much admiration for her that everyone kept coming and my family wasn't an absolute train wreck when it came to Christmas dinner I should say but certainly grandma was the one who there was such affection for.

She was the glue of the family. When it comes to the church I'm not the glue and you are not the glue. Jesus is the glue.

He's the one who holds us together keeps us coming back Sunday by Sunday. You see Jesus' power as well as his awareness of all that's going on is so crucial to see in John 13.

[28 : 36] We've seen the table from the perspective of the documentary camera zooming in and zooming out and the different characters the thoughts and attitudes of the heart. That's Jesus' perspective. He knows what everyone's thinking.

He knows what everyone's feeling. He knows all that's going on in the hearts and minds of those of us here today. Verse 1, again, 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. There's all the knowledge. There's all the power. having loved his own who are in the world, he loved them to the end.

You see, Jesus' knowledge of what is going on in the disciples' hearts and minds doesn't cause him to rethink his plans. It propels him towards the cross.

God's love. And as Jesus knows what's going on in your heart and in your mind, he knows our sin. It drives him to the cross because he's the glue of the family.

[29 : 43] He is currently with the Father, he's currently ruling the universe from there, holding all things together and he's established his people as those whom he has washed. And he knows those who he has washed.

And so as we gather Sunday by Sunday, we're not the glue, we're the embarrassing uncle. We are the gossiping aunt, the forgetful brother, the proud sister.

So am I. That's the role that we play in our extended family. We try to hide some of those things from each other but God knows, Jesus knows what's going on inside of us. And that drives him to the cross to wash us and to save us.

See, what brings us together each Sunday is not our moral worth, it's not our individual uprightness, it's not our doctrinal clarity, it's not even primarily our decision to follow Jesus, it's those, we are those who have been washed by Jesus, the glue of the family.

And what this means is if we turn ever so briefly in our minds to the idea of a church plant in the east end of Glasgow, yes, God willing, I might be leading that and St.

[31 : 02] Silas is praying for that and sending people to it and there'll be a launch team that is the crux of that plant initially, but the church plant doesn't belong to me, far from it, the church plant doesn't belong to you, it belongs to the Lord Jesus Christ who has died for it washed it and will come back to claim it.

We are his people, we will be his people until he comes back. There's that line at the end of verse one, he loved them to the end, loved them to the end.

Because Jesus holds all things together not primarily, sorry, not by fear or not even primarily by power, he holds all things together love, a specific saving love for his own, for those the Father has given him.

And as the one who holds all things together, Jesus bends down to wash you. And if you're here this morning and you're still working out who Jesus is and you know you haven't sort of crossed the line to say, yes, Jesus is my King, it's worth saying, you can buck against Jesus' desire to wash, you can betray his love like Judas does, you can let the devil master you, you can be washed by Jesus.

That's what happens to Peter. As we come to a finish, if there's a particular sin in your life which you know you need to ask Jesus to wash you of, I want to give you a moment now to bring that to Jesus, that he might wash it away.

[33 : 02] Would you give it over in prayer to him? And then I'll close in prayer as the band comes up. I'm going to give you a moment to pray that. Father, unless your precious son washes us by his blood, we have no part with him.

And therefore no part, no place, no relationship with you. A renewed relationship with you, our creator, is what our hearts yearn for.

For you have made us and you know us better than we know ourselves. And we thank you for Jesus, the one who washes us. May our lives be lived in response to the cleansing work of Christ.

And be marked by obedience, joy, and satisfaction in him. In Christ's name we pray. Amen.