

**To Exalt Christ;
To Equip, Encourage, Exhort, Edify God’s Elect**

**Preparing For Departure: Called to Serve
John 13:1-17**

This morning we begin a new series of sermons that will take us from Lent to Easter Sunday. Advent prepares us for the arrival of Christ. Lent prepares us for the departure of Christ. Lent involves sacrifice, i.e. usually giving something up which is symbolic of Christ sacrificially giving up his life for three days on Good Friday to save our lives eternally.

John, chapters 13 - 17 are known as the *Upper Room Discourse*. There John gives his readers an in-depth account of the evening before Christ’s, departure, his death. In these chapters we see Jesus preparing his disciples for his departure. He had previously told them of his pending death as recorded in Matthew 16, Mark 8 Luke 18 well ahead of our passage today. They knew something was going to happen, but did not know when. This evening, Jesus gives them his final preparations. John begins his record of that evening by saying that Jesus knew, he had knowledge that the time had come.

Knowledge – John 13:1

We read in verse 1– *“It was just before the Passover Feast. Jesus knew that the time had come for him to leave this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he now showed them the full extent of his love.”*

Jesus knew what would happen in Jerusalem the next day. It had been planned/known from eternity past. In 1 Peter 1:20 Peter testified – *“He was chosen before the creation of the world....”* Chosen for what? In Matthew 20:28 Jesus had said – *“the Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many.”* Jesus’ knowledge of why he came stretched back into eternity. He knew that he had been called to serve but he also knew it would be in the context of ransoming, redeeming, saving those whom God had also chosen from eternity past to be saved by Christ.

That is you and me. In Ephesians 1:4, 5 Paul wrote of those God had chosen – *“For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ in accordance with his pleasure and will”*

Our Saviour and our salvation was God's plan from eternity. The events of Genesis 3, the fall of mankind into sin, did not take God by surprise. He had chosen Christ his Son to be our Savior long before all that occurred. In 1 Peter 1:2, Peter again testified that we were "chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father...." God's foreknowledge said we would sin. God's foreknowledge said we needed a Saviour. Christ's knowledge of God's plan told him the time had come to serve as a ransom for those God had chosen.

Jesus also knew the Father had put all things under his power which included his life. (John 13:3). In John 10:18 Jesus said concerning his life, "...I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again. This command I received from my Father." Jesus would exercise that authority and power over the next three days. The stage was set for the fulfillment of Genesis 3:15, the first proclamation of the gospel. Christ would be the personification of the gospel, therefore the redemption of God's chosen and elect. Jesus had knowledge of all this.

Kneeling – John 13:2-5

That knowledge propelled him forward toward Calvary. But in verses 2-5 Jesus first kneels down and washes the feet of the disciples, including Judas. Foot washing was normally done by the lowliest of servants in a household. Jesus had two reasons for doing this. First it was how he "showed them the full extent of his love." 13:1. Second reason is later in verse 15 when he says, "I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you" This was his example of being a servant. In Matthew 20:28 he said he came serve and be a ransom, a redemption. The supreme example of him being a servant, was as a ransom for many. In kneeling before the disciples he was in a real way kneeling before his Father, serving him as Savior for the redemption, the salvation of many. To be a servant is to be obedient. In Romans 5:19b Paul wrote, "through the obedience of the one man the many will be made righteous." Christ was ultimately obedient to God his Father for our sake.

Philippians 2:9, 10 tells us that because Christ humbled himself and became obedient to death on a cross, which was really his obedience to his Father, Paul wrote, "Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name..." and why? So "that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth." Christ set the example by kneeling. i.e. serving and saving, so that we would one day kneel in praise and adoration.

Keeness – John 13:6-11

In verses 6-11 is the keeness, the ardency, the passion, in Peter. First he refuses to let Jesus wash his feet. Jesus replied in verse 8 “Unless I wash you, you have no part with me.” Then Peter’s keeness goes back fully the other way in verse 9 – “Then Lord, not just my feet but my hands and my head as well.” Such is the eager enthusiasm, the zeal and zest of Peter.

Jesus told him that when one has had a bath only the feet need to be washed because the bath makes his whole body clean. Christ said Peter is clean. What did he mean by clean?

We must consider it in the context of what Jesus said at the end of verse 10 – “And you are clean, though not every one of you. For he knew who was going to betray him....” Peter is clean but Judas is not. This is not physical cleanness but cleanness that comes from being in and having a right relationship with Jesus Christ. Jesus knew Judas would betray him. He knew Peter would deny him, which he did three times, but he also knew he would not betray him. He was in a right relationship with Christ which would only grow deeper.

Christ would harness his keeness. It happened on the day of Pentecost in Acts 2. Peter, following the resurrection and ascension of Christ was filled with the Holy Spirit. His keeness, his passion was harnessed as he effectively, boldly, authoritatively preached of Christ’s death/resurrection for the forgiveness of sins. 3000 people came to repentance and faith.

We also see it in Peter’s letters as he allowed the Spirit to guide him and empower him. Peter was washed clean ultimately by the blood of the Lamb, Jesus Christ his Saviour, as we all are washed clean. Peter’s keeness was tamed for God’s glory. John Calvin commenting on the cleanness of the 11 disciples said – ***“By means of it the Divinity of Christ was more fully made known to them, and they likewise perceived that purity is no ordinary gift of the Holy Spirit.”***

Keynote – John 13:12-17

A keynote is ***“a prevailing tone or idea.”*** The sermon title set the tone or idea – **Called to Serve.** Verse 15 is the keynote. Jesus said, – “I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you.” Verse 17b is the result – “you will be blessed if you do them.” Jesus showed his disciples and us by example the servant way. He washed their feet as an example of serving. It was a blessing to them.

But it was only a foreshadow of the greater blessing. It is the blessing that comes from Christ having been called to serve his Father and us. Called to ransom and redeem us for salvation, and resurrection, the eternal blessing of Good Friday and Easter Sunday. Jesus prepared his disciples then & his disciples now who have been called to salvation and to serve & to be a blessing. Amen. *Soli Deo Gloria.*