

**Sermon Notes of
Elder Ronald Kelly's Sermon on March 8, 2020:**

**"Transformed by the Son of God:
The Last Supper
(John 13:1-38) (Part 14)"**

[In today's sermon, Elder Ronald Kelly shows us through the Gospel of John the spiritual significance and importance to all of us – of Jesus washing His disciples' feet and the giving of the bread and wine.]

Introduction:

- 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.
- As we have encountered a time or two in the gospel of John, he places events in a different time order than the synoptic gospel writers of Matthew, Mark and Luke.

- John specifically states it was before the Passover festival.
- The synoptic gospels, on the other hand place the Lord's Supper on the opening of the Passover festival (the traditional Seder of the Jews).
- From John's gospel, we would glean that Jesus ate a supper with his disciples the night before the Jewish Seder.
- If so, they might or might not have had unleavened bread at the meal with whatever main dish of stew they chose.

- According to John, the crucifixion then occurred on the day of the Passover (Nissan 14) and his crucifixion as lamb of the world would have occurred in the afternoon at the same time the priests were sacrificing the Passover lambs.
- Jesus was then hurriedly placed in the grave for 3 days until his resurrection.

- If we take the synoptic gospel accounts apart from John, it would appear that the last supper would have been on the night of the Passover.
- If this is so, they would have had only unleavened bread and would have had some variety of the Passover lamb that had been killed in the afternoon.

- Another example of different timing is the cleansing of the temple.
- John places it very early in Jesus ministry while the synoptic gospels (Matthew, Mark and Luke) place it between the triumphal entry and the Lord's Supper.
- John may not have been as concerned of when things happened but what happened.
- It's not the timing or day that is so important but the event.

- So I suggest, we not trouble ourselves over it, but to determine what is the best way to observe or commemorate this event by partaking of the bread and wine.
- Of course not everyone feels that way.
- As an example, here is a quote on the subject from a Messianic Jewish community, who keeps the Passover.

Strangely enough, all of us do believe one thing -- that is, that proper Passover observance is VERY IMPORTANT -- in fact, it is VITAL to your salvation! To observe this holy festival on the WRONG DAY is disobedience to the plain commandment of God and example of the Messiah!

Therefore, it is imperative that we resolve this question, in our minds, honestly and faithfully, once and for all -- and NOT trust the "opinions" of mere men or religious leaders who have their own "ax to grind" and may be guilty of merely coveting a following and their financial support!

- See how easy it is to impute motives, with those who don't agree with your interpretation.
- I had a recent discussion on this subject and when I asked a fellow, from one the churches that split off from us, what he thought about the various ideas and interpretations that differing Christian groups have on this subject.
- He answered, "Those churches do not want to know the truth."
- Oh really? That's a pretty bold and judgmental statement.

- One thing I pray I have learned in the past two decades is that there are many sincere, truth seeking Christian ministers and churches in our world.
- Yes, we have differences. And we can discuss those differences. But with respect and not in judgement.

- Now over the past few years our denomination has given us the flexibility to do the Lord's Supper at a time we choose as a congregation.
- It could be the night of the Passover, the night before the Passover, or Sunday morning at church once a month or at church every week or once every quarter.
- Our congregations are free to select the frequency with which we observe the Lord's Supper.

John 13:1 (NIV), Having loved his own, he loved them to the end.

- This is one of the most powerful verses in all the Bible, and sets the stage for what is to come.

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

- Now this statement brings up a subject that we'll discuss at another time.
- Such as, how much was Judas responsible for what he did and what is his ultimate fate?
- Thankfully, it's not our decision to make, but rather Jesus'.

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; 4) so he got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist.

- What is so interesting is that the synoptic gospel writers of Matthew, Mark and Luke don't include this event in their gospels.
- And we really don't know why.

- We know that Matthew and John, the disciples of Jesus were there.
- Mark and Luke were not because they weren't disciples of Jesus at that time.

5) 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.

- John, reflecting many years later after the writing of the synoptic gospels, included this sequence in his gospel because it was such an important event.

6) He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, "Lord, are you going to wash my feet?" 7) Jesus replied, "You do not realize now what I am doing, but later you will understand."

- As we probably know that in that culture, the task of washing feet was the task of a servant, not just any servant, but the lowest of the servants in a household.
- It was not a pleasant task to wash off dusty feet, because people wore open sandals on unpaved roads.
- So, it was a curtesy to have your feet washed just as you entered someone's home.
- Because this task was done by the lowest of servants, Peter was astonished that Jesus the Lord, the Messiah was going to kneel down and wash their feet.

8) "No," said Peter, "you shall never wash my feet." Jesus answered, "Unless I wash you, you have no part with me." 9) "Then, Lord," Simon Peter replied, "not just my feet but my hands and my head as well!"

- Peter was thinking that if he had to have his feet washed to be a part of Jesus, then he wanted to have all of himself washed by Jesus.

10) 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." 11) For he knew who was going to betray him, and that was why he said not everyone was clean.

- John adds this comment in verse 11, knowing that Judas would later betray Jesus.

12) 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.

- No, they really didn't understand then.

13) "You call me 'Teacher' and 'Lord,' and rightly so, for that is what I am. 14) Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. 15) I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you.

- OK. Here is another one of those questions that we have to deal with: Is this a literal command to be done while taking the Lord's Supper?
- Most churches do not.
- If we place undo importance on the physical, we might just miss the spiritual.
- Ron Kelly is not opposed to washing feet.

- He has done this in our churches once a year on Maundy Thursday for many, many years now.

16) Very truly I tell you, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. 17) Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them.

- So, to what degree is the actual washing of feet commanded?
- Some churches place a great deal of importance on it and one must do it once a year.
- So, is this a literal command from Jesus or is there a spiritual application that is significantly more important than the physical act itself?
- Is this a literal command to be always practiced in the church, or is it an example of us to constantly show humility.
- Foot washing was an act of humility.
- Jesus explained that this act demonstrated the attitude of servitude, the attitude of love, care and concern.
- These attitudes are significantly more important to demonstrate to others than this act itself, but Ron is not opposed to the act of foot washing.
- Now, some will say that, "Since it plainly says in the Bible that you should do it, that's the end of that. If you don't do it, you are disobedient."
- Now there are other commands in the Bible that are figurative, as well.
- So, it is our opinion as a denomination, that it's perfectly legitimate for a congregation to practice foot washing if and when they want to and it's perfect legitimate for a congregation to understand this act in a spiritual context.
- Our congregation has done it annually, but now we don't do it because we don't have a hall available on Maundy Thursday evening.
- Now, we are more than welcome to have in-home services for small groups duplicating our Maundy Thursday services of foot washing and partaking of the Lord's Supper.
- So, once again, let's not miss the spiritual significance of this in light of the physical.
- It's not the washing, but rather the attitude we approach our brothers and sisters.
- So with those controversies still alive with us, let's turn back to John's account as he explains what Jesus meant when He said not all were clean even though He had washed the feet of all 12.

18) "I am 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.' [Psalm 41:9]

- There were so many events in Jesus' life that were prophesied in the Old Testament.

19) "I am telling you now before it happens, so that when it does happen you will believe that I am who I am. 20) Very truly I tell you, whoever accepts anyone I send accepts me; and whoever accepts me accepts the one who sent me."

21) After he had said this, Jesus was troubled in spirit and testified, "Very truly I tell you, one of you is going to betray me."

22) His disciples stared at one another, at a loss to know which of them he meant. 23) One of them, the disciple whom Jesus loved, was reclining next to him.

24) Simon Peter motioned to this disciple and said, "Ask him which one he means."

25) Leaning back against Jesus, he asked him, "Lord, who is it?"

26) Jesus answered, "It is the one to whom I will give this piece of bread when I have dipped it in the dish." Then, dipping the piece of bread, he gave it to Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot. 27) As soon as Judas took the bread, Satan entered into him. So Jesus told him, "What you are about to do, do quickly."

- Judas became an agent of Satan.

28) But no one at the meal understood why Jesus said this to him. 29) Since Judas had charge of the money, some thought Jesus was telling him to buy what was needed for the festival, or to give something to the poor. 30) As soon as Judas had taken the bread, he went out. And it was night.

31) When he was gone, Jesus said, "Now the Son of Man is glorified and God is glorified in him. 32) If God is glorified in him, God will glorify the Son in himself, and will glorify him at once.

33) "My children, I will be with you only a little longer. You will look for me, and just as I told the Jews, so I tell you now: Where I am going, you cannot come. 34) "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. 35) By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."

- Whatever else we may think of New Testament commands, this by far is the most important.
- This kind of love is "agape" love, the sacrificial, caring love of God.
- God imparts this love to us through the Holy Spirit.
- Unfortunately, Christians are not always doing this so obviously.

36) Simon Peter asked him, "Lord, where are you going?" Jesus replied, "Where I am going, you cannot follow now, but you will follow later."

- It would have been very discouraging to Peter to know right then that Jesus was going to be crucified and that Peter, himself, years later was also going to be crucified.

37) Peter asked, "Lord, why can't I follow you now? I will lay down my life for you." 38) Then Jesus answered, "Will you really lay down your life for me? Very truly I tell you, before the rooster crows, you will disown me three times!

- Of course, this is a very troubling scene.
- Peter no doubt thinks he will do anything and go anywhere for Jesus.
- But the agonizing truth about our human nature is that we don't always walk the walk we talk about.

Communion service:

- Today we have covered the emotional last supper of our Lord and his disciples.
- We have briefly discussed that the synoptic gospels give a more complete picture of what Jesus did that night – the implementation of the bread and wine to represent the total sacrifice of Jesus as the Passover Lamb, although John doesn't.
- Ironically enough when we read of the ongoing observation of the Lord's Supper, we turn to the apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 11.
- We should note that Paul's letter to the Corinthians was written before most of the gospel writers.
- In the context of this chapter, Paul has to correct the manner in which the Corinthian church had been observing the Lords' Supper:

1 Corinthians 11:20 (NIV), So then, when you come together, it is not the Lord's supper you eat, 21) for when you are eating, some of you go ahead with your own private suppers. As a result, one person remains hungry and another gets drunk.

- It's logical to assume that the New Testament church observed the Lord's Supper on a regular basis, not just once a year.
- It was probably set in a home of a member. A full meal was served. And the elements of the bread and wine were also served.
- We also need to note that Paul never mentions foot washing as part of the Lord's Supper.
- But Paul has to admonish the church, since they were missing the whole point.
- Class distinction played a part. The well to do would eat first. Then the servants and slaves would take what was remaining, which many times was very little.
- And some of the well-to-do over drank and got drunk!
- That was all wrong!

1 Corinthians 11:23, For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: the Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, 24) and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, "This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me."

25) In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, "this cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me." 26) For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

- Thus, the Lord's Supper, to the church, is always to help us never forget – to always remember what Christ did for us.
- We proclaim his death till he comes again. This is so important!
- The manner in which the elements are received and taken brings believers into communion with Christ and with one another.
- That's why one name for this commemoration is "communion."
- Jesus, the Bread of Life, shared his life with us.
- Jesus, the redeemer, shared his love for us by laying down his life for us.
- Indeed, this is the greatest love.

- When we receive the bread and wine of communion we are sharing in the life and love of Jesus that reaches all the way back to before the foundation of the world when we, along with all humanity, were chosen to be in Christ.
- We are chosen to share in the love and life that is shared by the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
- Communion, then, is about God's desire to share himself with us by determining to adopt us as his children.
- It's about being one with each other and with the Father as Jesus is one with the Father and with us.
- A prayer of blessing on the communion elements was given.