SBC Chapel (14 January 1993) NIV (12 Minutes)

**Dirty Saints**

***John 13:1-17***

**Topic:** Servanthood

**Subject:** You do humble tasks for others

**Complement:** when you genuinely love them

**Purpose:** The listeners will gladly do humble tasks for others.

**Introduction**

1. Arouse Interest: At SBC we have been exposed to theologies of various types—systematic, biblical, conservative, liberal, etc.

2. However, one theology that you may not considered is a theology of dirt. So my message today is on a biblical view of dirt—teaching really needed in squeaky-clean Singapore.

a. As we all know, dirt was invented by God on the third day of creation.

b. Shortly afterwards God used dirt to make man.

c. And throughout the ages dirt has remained to walk on, to play with, and to despise.

3. Background: During the time of Jesus dirt was especially despised. For this reason the Romans built numerous public baths—but only for men.

a. No doubt Jesus and the disciples used these baths, and certainly on such a special occasion as the Passover they visited the public bath.

b. However, by the time they made their way to the upper room for their meal, the dirty roads had soiled their feet. Worse than that, upon arriving at the room, they discovered that for some reason the servant wasn’t there to wash their feet.

c. What were they to do? The first disciple saw the water jug, basin, and towel by the door and passed by. Then, one by one, the others did the same. Each one thought to himself, “Why should *I* get dirty for the others?”

4. Raise Need: This question is raised by you and me too: “Why should I get dirty for others?”

a. Some of you asked that question this week. You said in your heart, “Why does SBC insist on having us do these campus duties? Can’t I just pay tuition and avoid the dirt?”

b. I struggled with this question last night. I pondered helping my wife with the dishes after dinner, but told her, “Honey, I can’t help tonight. I have to go prepare my sermon on servanthood!”

5. Subject: So why should you get dirty for others? What does getting dirty demonstrate? This issue is modeled by our Lord Himself in today’s text. Today we’ll see from our text three reasons we should get dirty for others. John 13. Will you turn to John 13 please?

(The first reason we should get dirty for others is because…)

**I. Getting dirty shows your love.**

You demonstrate that you care when you serve other people. *[Here’s my restatement.]*

A. Verse 1 says Jesus’ washing His disciples’ feet showed His love in the most humble way possible (1). *[Underlining the verse number means I read the verse at this exact point.]*

1. Think of it! What followed—his washing their feet—is said to be “the full extent of his love.”

2. The Greek says “he loved them to the end.” Here was the climax of His love, first shown in the foot washing and then later in the giving of His own life.

B. You know, *you* show your love for others by doing undesirable tasks too.

1. This is exactly what my wife Susan has done for our three sons—especially as babies. One of my seminary professors defined a baby as a person with whom, wherever there’s a hole, something’s coming out. Dirty diapers defines a mother’s love and my wife loves our boys “to the end”—literally!

2. The number of undesirable tasks we can do to show our love is endless. Perhaps you thought your Field Education assignment was going to be preaching, but in the final setup you ended up wiping runny noses in the nursery. Do you do it cheerfully because you love people?

(There’s a second reason to get dirty for others—not only to demonstrate our love but because…)

**II. Getting dirty shows humility.**

Servanthood shows that Christ can curb our pride.

A. Notice in verses 2-11 how Jesus showed humility in His washing of the disciples’ feet:

1. He washed their feet while the meal was being served (2a). When the food is right there before us, for most of us the last thing we think about is “eating humble pie”!

2. He washed Judas’ feet even though Judas had already committed himself to Satan for betrayal (2b).

3. He washed their feet even though He had all power and divine authority (3).

4. He interrupted His meal to wash their feet as a servant would (4-5).

5. He only washed Peter’s feet after being requested to do so (6-11, don’t read).

B. Your humble service shows others that Christ has curbed your pride.

1. Of course, humility is seen only when getting dirty is voluntary. A man once gave this true account (SERVING OTHERS resistance to):

We were standing in line outside a busy restaurant. The harried hostess was checking to find out how many people were in each group. “Party of two,” the woman behind us said to her, “and could we please have Michelle?” Annoyed looks turned towards her until she added, “Michelle is my daughter, and just once in my life I want her to wait on me!” Getting dirty is humble when it is voluntary.

2. Humility is also seen when service is done without complaining. Notice that Jesus didn’t go around the table muttering, “Good grief, boys! Here I come, all the way from heaven for you, and you can’t even wash *my* feet. OK, I’ll wash your feet, but remember—you owe me one!”

3. Humility is also seen when service isn’t not bound by conventional roles. Can a man wash dishes and still be a man? I suspect that if you can wash *feet* and keep your masculinity, then it applies to dishes too.

4. Generally getting dirty for others requires us to swallow our pride. One friend I knew at seminary gave this testimony: “In Malaysia I was the marketing executive for the largest oil refinery in the country. To come over here and sweep floors is quite a change. It’s tough, but I think the Lord is teaching me a lesson.” (SERVANT’S HEART by breaking pride)

5. Have you also left a professional job only to clean toilets at SBC? When you perform your campus duties without grumbling you really testify to how Christ can change a life.

6. Someone has well said, “When a man forgets himself, he usually does something everybody else remembers” (SERVICE remembered). [Repeat for emphasis.]

(We’ve seen so far that getting dirty for others shows both love and humility. One final reason we need to get dirty is because…)

**III. Getting dirty shows you imitate Christ.**

True servants always follow in the steps of the Master Servant.

A. Jesus washed their feet to set an example of love humbly serving others (12-17).

B. It’s amazing to think that doing humble tasks follows the example of God Himself!

**Conclusion**

M.I.1. This last section provides the main thrust of the passage: *When you love people like Jesus you don’t mind dirt.* You *get* dirty! If caring for people is the priority in your life then you won’t be concerned with a little dirt.

2. And *why* do you get dirty? To show love, to show humility, and to imitate Jesus.

3. Let’s bow together. But before we pray, how is God calling you to get dirty for Him?

a. Take your roommate’s garbage out?

b. Go the extra mile in your campus responsibility?

c. Do some chore which is typically the role of the opposite sex?

d. What one thing do you hate to do for others? Will you do that today in Jesus’ name?

e. Will you ask the person who’s closest to you, “Am I a servant to you?” If you’re unwilling to ask the question then you already know the answer.

4. “Lord, pride was the first sin and probably the foundation of most of the sin in our lives. Please help us show your wonderful work in us by willing to get dirty in Your name. In Jesus’ name, amen.”

**Preliminary Questions (working copy)**

**Verses Questions**

General What did the author record just prior to this passage? (Jesus has just said His last public words to a primarily unbelieving crowd.)

General Why is this passage in the Bible? (Christ is clear in verses 14-15 that it is to show us that we need to imitate Him by serving one another in the lowliest of ways.)

1 How long before the Passover?

1 Does “now” refer to the foot washing?

2 Why did Jesus wait until the meal was being served before washing their feet?

2 What is the significance of saying here that Judas was the betrayer?

3-4 How does the foot washing have impact considering that Jesus had all authority?

4-5 Why the description of how He did it?

6-11 What’s the meaning of the interaction with Peter? (One noted it means “Loving involves being clean for service” but surely it’s more than this)

8 Why didn’t Peter want his feet washed? Pride? Humility?

14 What is meant by washing feet?

15 Why did Jesus wash the disciples’ feet and not the feet of the general public?

**Possible Illustrations** *(I typed them in as they came to mind but only the first was actually used)*

Roman baths background

No statement of Christ is recorded while washing the feet except His response to Peter.

No-one helped Him as He served

True Jesus Church view on foot washing as necessary for salvation

**Possible Applications***(I also typed these as they came to mind but only used the first two)*

Take your roommate's garbage out

Don’t be locked into traditional responsibilities in the home (men—wash dishes or cook)

My receiving of a birthday card from Michael Shen and Dr. Webster (my mission boss)—simple ways to serve a subordinate

Are we like the disciples—willing for Jesus to wash *our* feet, but unwilling to wash *others’* feet?

A fellow lecturer at a different school who said to me, “This is absurd! You have a doctorate and here you are stapling papers?”

A pastor friend in the US—spending so much time hammering nails at the church building that he neglected his preaching (possibly share to illustrate that serving others doesn’t mean we need to always do the most humble task)

**Dirty Saints (working copy)**

***John 13:1-17***

**Exegetical Outline**

Prologue: The setting is in the upper room the night before Christ’s crucifixion, just after His last public statements to an unbelieving crowd and just before Judas left to betray Him. Christ and the disciples had moved from public view in chapter 12 to a private upper room. Peter and John were preparing the Passover (Luke 22:8), but none had volunteered to wash their feet—probably because they had just argued over who was the greatest (Luke 22:24ff.).

Exegetical Idea: The reason Jesus washed the disciples’ feet in such a way as to shame them for their pride was to set an example of love humbly serving others.

I. (1) The reason Jesus washed their feet was to show His love in the most humble way possible.

II. (2-11) The reason Jesus washed the disciples’ feet in such a humble manner was to shame them for their pride.

A. (2a) He washed their feet while the meal was being served.

B. (2b) He washed Judas’ feet even though Judas had committed himself to Satan for betrayal.

C. (3) He washed their feet even though He had all power and divine authority.

D. (4-5) He interrupted His meal to wash their feet as a servant would.

E. (6-11) He only washed Peter’s feet after being requested to do so.

III. (12-17) The reason Jesus washed their feet was to show how love humbly serves others.

A. (12-13) Christ did not deny His position of authority by washing their feet.

B. (14-17) He washed their feet to set an example of love shown in humble service.

**Homiletical Exposition** (cyclical inductive form)

**Introduction**

1. Today’s sermon is on a biblical view of dirt—teaching needed in squeaky-clean Singapore.

2. Background (above)

3. Subject: Why should you get dirty for others? What does getting dirty show?

**I. Getting dirty shows your love.**

A. Jesus washed the disciples’ feet to show His love in the most humble way possible (1).

B. You show your love for others by doing undesirable tasks (examples).

**II. Getting dirty shows your humility—that Christ can curb your pride.**

A. Jesus washed the disciples’ feet in a humble manner to shame them for their pride (2-11).

1. (2a) He washed their feet while the meal was being served.

2. (2b) He washed Judas’ feet even though Judas had given himself to Satan for betrayal.

3. (3) He washed their feet even though He had all power and divine authority.

4. (4-5) He interrupted His meal to wash their feet as a servant would.

5. (6-11) He only washed Peter’s feet after being requested to do so.

B. Your humble service shows others that Christ has curbed your pride (examples).

**III. Getting dirty shows you imitate Christ.**

A. Jesus washed their feet to set an example of love humbly serving others (12-17).

B. Doing humble tasks follows the example of God Himself!

Conclusion

1. When you love people you don’t mind dirt. You get dirty! (M.I.)

2. Review MPs

3. Applications

4. Prayer

**Reflections on this Particular Chapel Sermon:**

1. *Time Limit:* I limited myself to 12 minutes because of translation into Chinese and so that I would preserve the good graces of the students who hate chapel to go overtime (this is most of them—me too!). The actual preaching time with translation ended up being 25 minutes.

2. *Verses Skipped:* Given the above time constraint I was not able to deal with the difficult section on Peter and Jesus (vv. 6-11). In fact, I didn’t even read it. I also left off the last two verses, not even reading them either (vv. 16-17). This passage is very familiar to most believers so the explanation part of the message is covered very briefly. I commented on verses 2-11 in staccato fashion—a quick deductive statement followed by the reading of the verse(s). The developmental question addressed is not explanation or validation but application.

3. *Theme:* Most of us at SBC have heard our share of sermons on servanthood. Knowing this, I felt I had to say the same thing in a new, less offensive way. So I had the idea of talking about “getting dirty” in a somewhat ambiguous but cute way in the intro. This theme is carried throughout the message.

4. *Illustrations:* Given the sensitive nature of talking about humility, I purposely chose not to use myself as an example! The comment in the intro about myself (4.b.) is designed to put the listener at ease that the speaker hasn’t arrived and to do so in a humorous way. (I generally try to get people to laugh once or twice in a sermon intro as laughter is such a tension releaser. Once the listener puts his defenses down then he can listen too.) I had to leave out the illustration in II.B.1. due to time constraints. (This one related least to SBC life so it was the one to go.) Notice also that after some illustrations is a title in parentheses like “(SERVICE remembered).” This shows where it is in my 3 x 5 card illustration file.

5. *Clarity:* Every time the subject, main points, or main idea appears they are restated. (I memorized the statements word-for-word but only had a general idea what I would say to restate each.) Transitions are placed in parentheses and whenever I was to read a verse I underlined it in the notes. Also, I purposely did not announce my text in the intro until I had told them what to look for; otherwise, they would have missed my subject while looking up the passage. Also, the background was given in the intro rather than the body because it worked well with the concept of dirt and enabled me to go through the text fairly quickly. One final thing: I always pencil in my Bible a vertical line wherever I am to start or stop reading the text. This enables me to read with expression without concern for where I should stop.

6. *Applications:* These appear throughout to keep up interest but are not fully addressed until the conclusion due to time restraints. The washing dishes statement (II.B.3.) appears in the form of a question accompanied by a sarcastic, low tone of voice to be less offensive by use of humour.

7. *Practice:* Ideally I would like to practice a message 10 times before preaching it. (Sometimes I have done it only once—or even not at all!) This sermon was preached 6 times in its entirety—4 times the day before it was preached and twice in the morning of the actual sermon delivery. I had to do it this many times and keep the points simple because I’m such a forgetful person. (A few sections I had a problem remembering, so these were practiced about 8-9 times.) Practicing several times enabled me to know the message well enough to preach without notes so it could sound natural.

8. *Procedure:* The step-by-step method of putting this message together was the same in the class notes (pp. 27-28).