



## DUDLEY'S MONTHLY MESSAGE

JOHN 13

MARCH 2020

# THE NATURE OF HIS NAME

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*The apostle John closes his gospel account by recording the very last discourse Jesus had with his disciples. John recounts the prayer Jesus prayed to the Father after revealing intimate insights to the disciples about sharing the life of God. He prays that they (and we) will know in fullness the joy of sharing his very life.*

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Jesus relates that he has made known to them how he was sent from the Father, how he revealed the true nature of the Father, and how he has kept them in the Father's name. He asks the Father to continue to keep them in his name as they embrace the full meaning of being loved completely as humans who share eternal life. It is noteworthy that his prayer is not about them behaving better or being more religious. He wants them to know what it's like to be "loved humans." The human experience proves that a focus on simply behaving better, though perhaps temporarily satisfying, does not transform anyone. Jesus' whole mission was not to make nice religious people out of his disciples, but to love them with the same love the Father

has for him. Those who receive that love are radically transformed by it. Their very names are changed. The nature of the name he gives is that of a fully loved person—loved by God, sent by God, and given all things by God to do what God does on earth. The story of Peter is a prime example: the transformational love of Jesus transformed Simon, a coward focused on self-preservation, to Peter, a radical evangelist willing to suffer and die for the sake of the Gospel.

Jesus' revelatory discourse with his disciples begins in John chapter 13 when Jesus and his disciples are gathered to share the Passover meal together. According to the cultural custom, they reclined at a low table to

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take the meal. This arrangement meant that the feet of one disciple would be close to the head (and nose) of the one behind him. Clean feet were important. They had walked to the location on dirty, dusty, manure-filled streets. Usually a slave was present to wash the feet for both sanitary and olfactory reasons. No slave was present on this particular night. Jesus noticed the situation and arose and proceeded to wash their feet. At first, Peter declined, recognizing the impropriety of the Lord washing their feet. In that honor-based culture, it was shameful for the leader to stoop so low. When told that it was only in receiving Jesus' service that Peter could continue to be a part of this new people of God, he relented and even asked that his whole body be washed. Jesus assured him that he (Jesus) was already meeting the only need that was required. He also told the whole group that they would more fully understand his actions later.

In the act of foot washing, Jesus was demonstrating for them the nature of the name that he had been making known to them during his three years of ministry.

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He showed that a fully loved person is given the freedom to serve and love others.

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They had seen the miraculous power of that name displayed in healing the sick, raising the dead, expelling demons, calming the winds, multiplying food, etc. Now he was showing them the true nature of the name. A dirty world needs foot washers who aren't doing it for their own recognition or trying to gain some ground with God and people. They will have to be people who bear the name "loved." Jesus was exposing true humanity to them. He knew that the Father had "given all things into his hands, and that he came from God and was going back to God" (John 13:3 ESV). After the cross, the resurrection, the ascension, and Pentecost, they would take over the foot washing duties, and they would know the same kind of love.

When one knows that he has been given everything, he is inevitably grateful. The nature of the name "loved" includes deep and abiding gratitude. Ingratitude reveals entitlement thinking and insecure standing. People who are insecure and ungrateful can't afford to appear to be servants. They are so concerned about their inclusion at the table that they don't notice dirty feet, or they expect someone else to take care of such things. It is beneath them and very threatening. Gratitude arises from knowing we are entitled to nothing and that everything is a gift, including our status as "loved." The true nature of humans

as God created them involves being thankful to God and appreciative to others. This “gratitude-because-I’m-loved” posture activates parts of the brain that God designed to produce joy, and joy is the God-designed power of all true motivation. Without joy, we search for and substitute other pain-relieving remedies. In other words, we aren’t designed to live without joy. The good news is we don’t have to since Jesus, who is full of joy, is sharing his life with us.

Recently, I was summoned to renew my Texas driver’s license. Previously, I had renewed online, but new laws required that I show up in person this time. I had been warned about long lines, so I went early. There were already 200 people in line when I arrived before the doors opened. My allotted number was 93. As we found some seats, I chatted with those around me, enjoying their stories and learning from them. We mused about the inefficiency of the operation, but laughed it off as “the government’s way.” After one hour and fifteen minutes, I noticed the electronic board posting the numbers currently being processed. When I sat down, they were at 13. Now they were all the way up to 20. I calculated and determined that as number 93, I would be there until the next day. I began to fidget. I called

other locations to check on the waiting time. I even called other cities, searching for any place that could promise a better outcome. I was stuck. The inefficiency was maddening. My 4-year-old grandson could organize things better! The people around me were no longer interesting. They were just obstacles to my getting called. The book I had been reading seemed suddenly lifeless and uninteresting. All my relational circuits were closed. My awareness of others and their possible needs were oblivious to me. No joy. No peace. No motivation. I became just a victim of poorly thought out government regulations and procedures. I began to complain to myself and to God, and as others complained, I nodded in hearty agreement. Not very flattering for a Christian, huh?

Thankfully, I had a “prodigal son moment,” and came to myself: “What am I doing here? Why am I indulging this perspective? My Father has better things for me. It is my mind. I can choose where to direct it.” Without much emotion, I started with the obvious: “I am grateful for someone establishing driving rules and licensing procedures. When the automobile was first invented, people were killing each other in their ignorance. I am grateful for the paved roads that allowed me to drive to

this location. I am grateful for the car that got me here. I am grateful for the jobs those people have who work there. I am grateful for the people around me who have such worth and are so interesting.” Suddenly, I began to notice people again. Anxiety diminished. Joy began to return. Jesus was with me, and being with him is enough. Strangely, the lines began to move faster. When I finally got to the desk, I was able to show respect and gratitude for the man who helped me. He thanked me when I left. Driving home, I was shocked at the obvious change in my attitude when I chose to give thanks. I also thought of times when I prolonged the misery of victimization. But, I smiled and was reminded that Jesus is always the same and always with me. He has given me the gift of sharing in his life and has given me the name “loved.”

Joyful people who know the nature of the name are able to see and meet needs that driven people will miss. When we are motivated by anger over injustice or inconvenience, we will instigate a cause-oriented movement. We could possibly end up washing people all over when only their feet need it. I am so grateful for people who have seen the specific needs of people they had never known until their own trial opened their eyes. Charles Colson went to prison. He saw

it as a gift and his eyes were opened to the needs of prisoners that led to one of the most effective prison ministries ever. Bill W. did not waste his addiction by staying in victimization. As a result, the Alcoholics Anonymous Twelve Step program has given help and hope to millions. So many more could be mentioned. Each of us who knows him has such an opportunity to access the power and joy of the name Jesus keeps us in. Foot washers that are effective are those who know their name—whose feet were washed by the Lord. Jesus became a servant because he knew who he was, who sent him, and where he was going. He knew that he and the Father were one. When we know his name, we know his nature, and what is keeping us in his fold.



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