

Sunday Morning Message

September 25, 2022

Jesus Washes the Disciple's Feet – An Example of Servant Leadership

The Gospel According to John

Text – John 13:1 - 20

Congregational Reading – John 13:12 - 17

Introduction (vs. 1 – 3)

In the last message from John's Gospel, we examined chapter twelve and listened to Jesus as He spoke to the crowds gathered near the Temple shortly after his Triumphal entry into Jerusalem. We discussed the fact that John's Gospel only includes a few of the many events that took place during these busy couple of days. The other three Gospel accounts need to be diligently compared for you to see the complete picture.

The context of John 13 is in the Upper Room at the conclusion of the Last Supper. John's gospel does not include much information regarding the Last Supper, save that it mentions here in v. 2 that the Supper was now ended, meaning the main meal had been eaten. The disciples were still fellowshipping together around the table.

This Last Supper took place, I believe, on Tuesday evening, the day before the Passover meal was to be eaten. So, the Last Supper is not the Passover; it takes place the day before the Passover (v. 1). After this time in the Upper Room, Jesus will leave for the Garden of Gethsemane where He will pray, and at the conclusion of His prayer, He will be arrested and led away first to the Jews, and then unto the Romans for crucifixion.

I. **Jesus Models Servant Leadership (vs. 4 – 5)**

At the conclusion of this Last Supper, Jesus washed the feet of His disciples, something that seemed very strange to His disciples at the time and would seem almost preposterous to us today, especially in this time of social distancing. It is not our custom to wash feet, nor is it necessary today to wash other people's feet as we all wear shoes. However, in Bible days, people wore sandals without socks, and walked on dirty roads that were at best, dusty; but were often, very muddy. People's feet were often filthy. So, it was not unusual for people to wash their feet upon entering a home. A parent might wash the feet of her small child, or a wife, her husband's. In the home of somebody wealthy, it might even be customary for a servant to wash the feet of an invited guest. However, it would have been very unusual for the master of the house to wash someone's feet.

- A. **There Was a Need** (The disciple's feet were dirty.)
- B. **There Were the Necessities to Meet That Need** (The basin, the water, and the towel were all there – verses 4 – 5.)
- C. **There Was Negligence on the Part of the Disciples** (The supper was now over; they had been in the Upper Room for a while, and yet they all still had dirty feet.)

II. Peter's Misunderstanding (vs. 6 – 11)

This was Peter's reaction in v. 6: *"Lord, dost thou wash my feet."* Peter did not understand what the Lord was doing. First, he believed that it was beneath the Lord to serve His servants that way.

But there is also a greater lesson here that Jesus taught Peter. He said that Peter was already washed, and he only needed to have his feet washed. Jesus was speaking figuratively here. Peter was saved – he was washed from his sins – but he was still living in a dirty, sin-cursed world. He was going to need at times to be cleansed because of the contamination with the world. This is a wonderful picture of sanctification. We are saved, meaning we are in a position of Justification before God because of what Jesus did for us on the Cross, but we still have our old Adamic, sinful nature and we are still influenced heavily and contaminated at times by the filth of this world. We need to often come to Christ for cleansing and forgiveness.

"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." (1 John 1:9)

This cleansing has nothing to do with going to Heaven when we die, but it does have to do with our relationship with Christ while still on earth.

III. Jesus The Mandate from Model (vs. 12 – 17)

The Mandate from the Model

We are challenged in this passage to follow the example of the Lord Jesus and wash each other's feet. In this crazy time that we are living in, most of us would be scared to death to get close enough to a non-family member and wash their feet. And, truth be told, most of us would not want anybody coming that close to us to have our feet washed. We are living in a time when we are admonished by health officials to keep a social distance. Yet, Jesus still commands us to be servant leaders. Foot washing may not be necessary today but being a servant to each other is still the command for every disciple of Christ. We have no church ordinance today to observe foot-washing ceremonies. Foot washing is not like the

Lord's Supper or Baptism. By washing the disciple's feet, Jesus was giving us an example of how we are to serve one another.

The disciples tended to compete for leadership positions. They all wanted to be served, rather than serve. That is human nature.

Jesus took it upon Himself to demonstrate servant leadership.

"And there was also a strife among them, which of them should be accounted the greatest. And he said unto them, The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and they that exercise authority upon them are called benefactors. But ye shall not be so: but he that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger; and he that is chief, as he that doth serve. For whether is greater, he that sitteth at meat, or he that serveth? is not he that sitteth at meat? but I am among you as he that serveth." (Luke 22:24-27)

See also Mark 9:33 – 37; Mark 10:35 - 45

"Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others. Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." - (Philippians 2:3-8)

This passage of Scripture is not teaching us as disciples of Christ that we specifically should wash each other's feet, but it is teaching us that we are to be servants to each other, in any way that is necessary. Today, foot washing is simply not necessary in most cases. (Exceptions – health care, parents of small children, etc.), **but Servant Leadership is Still Mandated Through Other Models.**

This is the challenge that we face today. We are to find ways to serve one another sacrificially and humbly. Social Distancing, however, will not always be possible. We will sometimes have to get closer than we might be comfortable with:

"When he was come down from the mountain, great multitudes followed him. And, behold, there came a leper and worshipped him, saying, Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean. And Jesus put forth his hand, and touched him, saying, I will; be thou clean. And immediately his leprosy was cleansed." (Matthew 8:1-3)

Jesus touched a leper. Some forms of Leprosy were very contagious, and it could easily be transmitted through touching. Yet, Jesus touched this leper.

If we are going to be a humble servant, we are going to have to get close to people, and we may have to get our hands dirty.

Notice that Jesus states very plainly that serving others is a key to happiness. This word, “happy” (μακάριοι from μακάριος – *Makarios*), is the same word translated “blessed” in many places in the New Testament, including in the Beatitudes (Matthew 5).

Maybe the reason why so many in our world are miserable is because they are trying to get others to serve them, instead of seeking ways to serve others.

Conclusion (vs. 18 – 20)

Jesus concludes this section with the reminder that His instructions here regarding servant leadership were not for everyone, they were only for those who truly belonged to Him. Judas was there, and Judas did not belong to Jesus. He was just about to go out to get the religious leaders and lead them to where Jesus would be in the Garden of Gethsemane.

Judas did not like the idea of serving others, he wanted to serve himself. That is why he was betraying Jesus for money.

Jesus told us that you could narrow down everything that God expects from us into two main areas – loving God and loving people. If we love God the way we should, we will also love the people that He calls us to love, and sometimes those people can be downright unlovable, and even dirty at times. We need to help God clean them up.

If you do not yet belong to Jesus, you can come to Him today in repentance and faith and receive Him as your Saviour.

If you do belong to Jesus, let me challenge you today to swallow your pride. Stop seeking to be served and start looking for ways to serve others. There are some people in your life that have some dirty feet and they need you to get down on your knees and wash them. It will take a lot of humility on your part and a little of your time, but the investment that you make in the lives of others will reap eternal rewards.

Illustrate – Darla Griffin and the other ladies in the Homeless Ministry.

Illustrate – The people who work with Don Noray.