

"Dwelt Among Men My Example is He"

John 13:1-20

The word Christmas means the celebration of the coming of Christ. Christ is not Jesus' last name; Christ is the title for the Messiah, which means the Anointed One. The Messiah is God's Son whom He promised to send to earth to rule over His people Israel and defeat all Israel's enemies one day.

But the Messiah was also to be born as a human. We know from Genesis 12 a seed of Abraham will be the source through which the world will be blessed. We know from Genesis 49 that a descendent from Judah (one of Jacob's 12 sons, Jacob being Abraham's grandson) would be this future ruler/king/Messiah. We find from 1-2 Samuel that this Messiah would come from David's family tree. We find from Micah that He will be born in Bethlehem yet somehow, He will also come out of Galilee (Is. 9). And Isaiah 9:6 tells us this child who would be born and rule from David's throne would also be divine, given to us by God Himself.

Yet when Jesus came, He didn't display the kind of kingly power people expected to see. Even though He was God's Son He didn't see His equality with God as something to be grasped; i.e. use to advance His own agenda. Even though He was the glory of God dwelling among men (John 1:14) His glory was veiled and yet what he showed was the truth and grace of God (John 1:18).

Even as a child He allowed Himself to be taught by His parents the basics of life. How to hammer a nail or chisel a stone or what 2x 2 is and who God is and what His Word says. We saw that last week in Luke 2 that Jesus the 12-year-old listened to the rabbis of His day and answered their questions and asked His own questions, allowing others to teach Him (He whose mere words brought this world into existence). And on His last night of earthly existence in a closed door meeting with His 12 disciples, Jesus chose to finally and clearly tell them He was in fact the Messiah, but instead of taking up a sword and lead them to victory over the Romans He grabbed a towel and a basin of water and washed their feet and said 'If you want to show the world Your my disciples then you will follow My example.

If we are Jesus' disciples then we must follow this same example to love one another in the same way. Obviously, the foot washing was a metaphor for humbly serving one another. It is the way we act toward each other that Jesus says the world will know we are His followers. So then, it should be a fair challenge to ask ourselves the question, do my co-workers, family, classmates, teammates and neighbours know I'm a follower of Jesus because of how I talk about and treat my fellow disciples? And does that servant attitude spill over into how I do my work, raise my family and involve myself in the community through sports or service?

Since the foot-washing was a metaphor for lowering ourselves to serve others as Jesus did, how should we be serving each other here as a church family as well as other fellow disciples in our geographical communities? Jesus calls us to serve one another as He did ...

Knowing We are Uniquely Loved of God **(13:1, 3)**

Those of us who are type A personalities and 'just want to get to the bottom line', are going to fail at this a lot. Because John doesn't tell us what Jesus does until v. 4 and even then, He writes this as if its in slow motion replay,

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

But we won't fully understand what He did nor how to serve like Him if we skip past the context of vv.1-3. It's the Passover- the last Passover before His death. We know what happens later that night and the next day – and 3 days later and even 40 days after that, and even 50 days after that . . . John is writing this for us, years after this has all taken place, knowing what we know that Jesus died and rose and ascended and the church grew in leaps and bounds even though the Romans persecuted Christians in the arena and destroyed the temple in 70 AD. Knowledge of the future and the assurance of God's plans and promises empower us to live for God and Jesus in the present. As it did for Jesus.

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.

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;

"Jesus knew" the plan of God. Jesus knew who He was in His relationship with God. "Jesus knew" that His future and ours is secure in God. Jesus could serve His disciples because He knew He was uniquely loved of God. So He simply obeyed what God wanted Him to do looking past the next day which wasn't good to the future promises of God.

We can serve one another like Jesus if we are secure in who we are in God and assuring ourselves of future blessings awaiting us for our obedience regardless of how things go in the present. When we are presented with a momentary opportunity to show love to one another, sometimes we hesitate because we're worried about their response not God's prior approval. God's already given us the thumbs up to serve like this because it pleases Him and how people respond doesn't alter who we are in God nor does it change our future security. That's always the internal battle when we're choosing to serve people in a humble manner. When we put their approval/reaction ahead of God's pleasure in our obedience we will most likely not obey Him. Have the confidence to humbly serve others because of your security in God desiring to please Him more than people.

John's still not done with setting up the context.

the hour had come for him to leave this world and go to the Father... ² The evening meal was in progress, and the devil had already prompted Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot, to betray Jesus.

Jesus gets up and starts to wash the disciples' feet including Judas'! So knowing Judas was going to betray Him Jesus calls us to serve others like He did ...

Even When We're Hurting **(13:2, 21, 26-27)**

The Passover was eaten at a low U-shaped table, not according to Leonardo Da Vinci. Jesus would have been seated at the spot of honour, 2nd from the top right with John to His right (because John leans back and talks to Jesus), who Jesus leans back and tells Judas to do what He's about to do quickly. But Jesus gets up from the table, starting with John, then Judas, then around the table until He gets to Peter at the top left corner.

Let's not forget Jesus' humanity here. V. 21 says

Jesus was troubled in spirit and testified, "Very truly I tell you, one of you is going to betray me."

This wasn't a new revelation to Jesus. In John 6:64 we read that Jesus knew from the beginning who it was who would betray Him. And 'the hour' had come, speaking of His crucifixion in which He would be separated for a few hours from His Father so He could pay the price for our sins. And He was leaving the world meaning leaving the other 11 whom He had lived with for 3 years and loved and who would abandon Him in His darkest hour. Jesus was hurting.

The reason why He washed the disciples' feet was to show them how to serve. But it should have been done already. Most of the time they had a gentile servant who would wash the dirty feet of sandaled travelers before they entered someone's house. When there was no servant somebody should take that up but because it was a position that even the Rabbi's said was below a disciple, no one did it. If anyone should have done it it should have been Peter because if he sat at the top left corner that was traditionally known as the servant's spot who would get up from the table when something is needed.

When we're hurting, we often have the tendency to think people should serve us. *'Don't they know I'm hurting? Don't they know that I just experienced this _____. I need to be served!'* If anyone had a right to feel that way it was Jesus at this moment. But He didn't allow His pain to stop Him from serving others the way God expects us to.

And of course, He served His betrayer and all those who abandoned Him when he was arrested. Jesus calls us to serve like Himself ...

To Those Undeserving **(13:4-5)**

Jesus comes around to each one, washes their feet, then dries their feet, moving on to the next one. These same disciples who according to Luke 22 argue about who's the greatest at the table. Ouch. I'm sure you could have heard a pin drop as Jesus washed their feet. Maybe they exchanged angry glances at each other, ('Why didn't you wash our feet?' You're the youngest [John]. You're one of His favourites [James]. You're in the servant's seat [Peter]. You're the tax -collector [Matthew].')

Remember what John the Baptist said of Jesus?

He is the one who comes after me, the straps of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie. [John 1:27]

'I don't deserve to do a gentile slaves' job to Jesus.' And Peter gets it and initially refuses to have Jesus wash his feet, saying 'You shall never to the end of the ages wash my feet!' Peter recognizes they don't deserve to be served like this. None of us do. We're all sinners in need of Jesus' death for our sins. We're all flawed and struggle with obeying God's Word the way we should. We've all hurt each other with our words or actions or nonactions. None of us deserve to be served and yet Jesus did that for His disciples and for us. That's why we serve others because none of us deserve it.

As Peter struggles with having Jesus wash his feet Jesus explains through another illustration that it was unnecessary to wash Peter's whole body because it's only your feet that need the occasional cleansing. Jesus talks about how those who are clean are those who believe in Him and

the one who is unclean is the one who rejects who He is – Judas. Jesus calls us to serve one another as He did,

Giving and Receiving to Show We are His **(13:6-11; 12:1-8)**

Jesus rebuked Peter because he refused to be served by Jesus. Accepting service from another is also a sign that we are His disciples. A lot of us struggle with that because we don't like feeling humbled, but Jesus says that's a sign your following Me. When did Jesus accept this kind of service? If we look back at John 12, which happened only a few days prior, Mary (Martha's sister) poured a whole container of spikenard; a fragrant perfume, on Jesus' head (according to Mark 14) and His feet and washed His feet with her hair.

The disciples were indignant by the waste of the perfume (Judas complaining we could have gotten money for it) but also embarrassed because Mary let her hair down in public (a taboo and a sign you were most likely a prostitute, which she obviously was not). Mary did it as a way of thanking Jesus for bringing her brother Lazarus back to life.

Jesus was quite firm when He told Peter 'Unless I wash you, you have no part with me'. Jesus is quite clear that being His disciple means we must receive service as well as give service. And that's hard for many of us and even harder for those who 'refuse to be served' and are always giving them-selves in service. A sign of humility is an expression of our gratitude and appreciation to others for their service and ministry. When people want to serve you, let them. It's not a sign of weakness; it actually shows you follow Jesus.

After He washes their feet He does something even more uncharacteristic – He explains what He did and why!

12... "Do you understand what I have done for you?" he asked them. 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. 16 Very truly I tell you, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him.

Not only does Jesus affirm that no one is above serving and loving others as He has done for them – since He the Lord of the world just did it – but since He was going away soon and leaving them behind, He was training them and us ...

To Prepare us to Be His Messengers **(13:12-16)**

When we read 'very truly' or 'truly, truly' [or literally 'Amen, amen'] it's a way of calling attention to what the speaker is about to say. Jesus has clearly said He is their master, who has just served Him, but now they are to be His messengers. And this is how they are to work together. Make sure you understand that Jesus is not so much focusing on what their message will be (because that's fairly obvious) but He's telling them **how** they are to live together so that their message is effective. If you don't show you love one another by serving each other why should the world take your message about Me seriously?

Remember, the disciples just argued about who should be sit at Jesus' right and left hands. None of them took up the basin and the towel. There had been some rivalry and dissension amongst the 12, and when Judas will betray Him they will all scatter. Jesus will spend 3 more chapters

teaching them about His going, the Spirit's coming and their mission in Ch.'s 14-16. Then He'll pray in Ch. 17 that God would be glorified through them and that they would be unified by the truth. If we are following His Word, we will live by it and be unified. And when we read the book of Acts and see the difference the Holy Spirit makes in their lives, we don't see any more dissension or rivalry. They do work together and the gospel reaches thousands.

Can that happen here through our church, through the disciples in our communities to reach many for Christ? It can since we all have the same Holy Spirit. But it's our choice.

And Jesus leaves us one more good reason why we should love and serve each other as He did,

So We Can Experience His Blessing **(13:17)**

In v.17 we read,

17 Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them.

Jesus didn't say we are blessed because we know these things. Obedience brings blessing. So, do we want God's blessing in our lives? Of course. Then we must obey His words to us, and here He tells us that means loving each other by serving and allowing service to come to us. We have seen now in 3 different passages that Jesus allowed people to raise Him, to teach Him, to love Him and serve Him. What would happen if we started being living examples of Jesus to each other? Actually, Jesus already told us what would happen; we'll be blessed and our communities will notice and some of them will want to become His followers too.

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If you have any comments or questions about this message please contact us
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