

“Jesus Modelled and Commanded Humble Servanthood”

John 13:1-30

The New Testament gives us four gospels; four recorded observations and Holy Spirit commentary on the life of Jesus. Even all together they don't give us a complete record of Jesus' life since John wrote in his gospel that there wouldn't be room in the world to record all that Jesus said and did (John 21:25)!

Each author has a different theme or focus he wants to pursue based on their audience. Matthew wrote primarily to Jews so they would understand Jesus is their Messiah, the promised Son of David. Mark wrote for a Gentile audience, a Roman audience who needed to understand all people need a Saviour because all have sinned. Jesus is Lord, greater than any human Emperor. Luke wrote to a man named Theophilus, an orderly historical record to prove the existence of Jesus, His care for everyone, His ultimate death and to explain through Acts why the disciples continued to spread His message and the church was expanding everywhere.

John writes differently. John's focus is theological. Jesus is God in the flesh. Ever since the beginning of time God has wanted to dwell with His people. He even became one of us. He even died for us. He rose to prove He was God's Son. John wants to show us the Father by showing us the Son. And especially in the last hours of His earthly life in John 13-20. Jesus, involving only two of His disciples, makes arrangements to celebrate the Passover privately with the 12. He doesn't want the rulers to know where He is and He doesn't want to give Judas a heads up before He says so.

As much as we can know for sure based on all four gospels and knowledge of how a Passover meal takes place, most likely the disciples and Jesus entered the room, reclined around a U-shaped table (the open end for serving) where Jesus would have been seated at the top right, second from the end, with John at his right and Judas at his left, the seats of honour. Peter is the first seat on the upper left, directly across from John.

Most likely it began with opening benediction, followed by the first of four cups of wine, each cup remembering part of the exodus. They would then wash their hands (ceremonially before they ate) but instead Jesus gets up and washed the disciples feet, probably starting at John and working His way around the table to Peter. Here in John 13:1-11 Jesus gives the illustration of His love; He washes their feet. In vv.12-20 He gives an explanation of what He has done and commands His disciples to show the same kind of love to each other. But its not until vv.21-30 that we really understand what it was He was commanding them to do. Disciples of Rabbis were to listen to what their rabbi taught, learn/retain it so they can do what the Rabbi does. So when we realize what Jesus has just illustrated and taught, we understand He commands all of us

To Consistently Serve All, Even Those Who Hurt You **(John 13:1-20)**

The washing of feet was a task that was necessary because of dusty roads and everyone wore sandals. When you entered a house, a Jewish family would have a Gentile slave to wash people's feet on entrance. At the last Passover, there is no servant. Jesus takes that role. It is the lowest form of service. Even John the Baptist said that he himself was not worthy to untie Jesus' sandals; i.e. to

wash His feet. Yet Jesus washes their feet and, as we see in the text the focus is on washing Judas' feet.

John builds up the drama of the moment when he begins:

It was just before the Passover Feast. Jesus knew that the time had come for him to leave this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he now showed them the full extent of his love

That last phrase is also translated "to the end". It doesn't just refer to the time (the end of His earthly life), although it's part of it. It has more the idea that He showed sacrificial love to those who would desert Him even hours before His death. Jesus was not focused on Himself. His focus was on others.

This is the definition of love, "agape" in the Greek. I actually avoided using love in my outline because too often we presume love is emotional, feelings oriented. The Greeks had different words for love. One for passions, one for friends and one for sacrificial service – "agape". "Agape" means choosing to serve you to meet your need at my expense, regardless of how it's received so that it benefits you.

"For God so loved the world that He gave His One and Only Son"

[sacrificially served us at His expense to meet our need; forgiveness]

"that whoever believes in Him"

[regardless of whether people receive Him or not]

"will have eternal life"

[our benefit].

To be like Jesus then, we must be willing to humble ourselves and serve people even those who mistreat us (believers or unbelievers). Maybe you're thinking, 'I can't do that [translated = 'I won't do that']'. Be honest with yourself and God. Yes, we can. Why? John gives us the answer in Jesus' example:

Jesus knew that the time had come for him to leave this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he now showed them the full extent of his love.

² *The evening meal was being served, and the devil had already prompted Judas Iscariot, son of Simon, to betray 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;*

Jesus had a very healthy theology about His relationship with the Father. Do you and I? We can humbly serve others

Because we know who we are and Whose we are (vv.1-4)

Jesus came from God and was going to God and that God had given Him a purpose in life; glorify God by revealing Him to others (17:4). His specific work he would do would be die on the cross for our sins. Because His life is secure in God, He can serve others the way God asks. If we follow Jesus as we say we do, because we've believed in Him by faith, we have a Father in heaven who loves us, has given us the purpose of revealing Him to others for His glory, and we know when our ministry/life ends we'll go to be with Him. Our security in God is directly linked to our service for God.

So our ministries aren't 'our' ministries, they are God's. We obey Him, He produces results. We obey Him to pray; He works in people's hearts. We obey to share Christ; He works in people's

hearts. We teach, encourage, lead worship, make a meal, donate to Ukrainian refugees; He causes results. When we serve Him, He can work results. When we don't serve ... well, don't expect results.

Jesus served knowing Satan was actively serving too. But, because He knows that he's God's Son and knows God has already said in His Word what will take place, Jesus can confidently serve God, not fearing the enemy. The enemy will hurt Jesus (He's known that since Genesis 3:15), but He knows He will overcome the enemy and the world.

Don't we know we are God's children? Won't we overcome the enemy? Don't we also know from Scripture that ... *the Father had put all things under his [Jesus]' power, and that He had come from God and was returning to God;* ... that the resurrection is already a done deal and so is His return to earth and establish His rule once for all?

What we know [Scripture] directly affects how we serve [obedience]. If we know that to choose, like Jesus to humble ourselves and serve even those who harm us verbally and physically; we know it isn't belittling; it's a sign of power and strength. I can serve the ones who dislike me or mistreat me because I know God sees it and lifts up the humble and brings down the proud. I don't do it as a weird form of punishment; that's not humility. I do it because my identity is in God and that frees me from worrying about what people think.

Yet our human pride wants to say to Jesus, 'How could you wash Judas' feet? Don't you know what he has already done behind your back and is planning on doing? Absolutely. Truth gives you power. Not power to lord it over people but power to humble yourself to serve others knowing God is in control, sees all and will do with our service what He chooses.

⁴ 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. ⁶ He came to Simon Peter

...sounding like Peter was probably the last one. Which makes sense. He probably started with John, then Judas, working His way around the U-shaped table to Peter. Now, Peter is as far away from Jesus as one can be. Why? Isn't he the leader? Isn't he the key holder? Of course. And as the leader Peter also knew that Jesus has taught different rules about leadership. How His followers lead through serving. The first will be last and so on. Peter sits in the last seat if you're coming in which is called the servant's seat. He probably served the food and got anything they needed. But as the servant it also fell to him to wash the disciples' feet since there was no Gentile among them. Or, it was a volunteer job that none of the disciples acted on. 'Well I'm not going to wash anyone's feet!'

And so Jesus calls us to serve even those who hurt us

Regardless of their response (vv.4-5)

No doubt everyone is humbled by Jesus' act; none more so than Peter. The Greek of Peter's words almost give the impression Peter was speechless or stammered: 'Master, You, me, wash, feet!!' The responses are interesting. Everyone allows Jesus but Peter is humiliated and says no. And then he accepts. But did this change Judas' heart? Did washing all the disciples' feet change their response because they would all abandon Jesus at the crucifixion and all express doubt when they first heard of the resurrection? Did Jesus know this would happen? Yes. And He still washed their feet.

As much as we hope doing something kind or meeting someone's need who, may have unfriended you or spoke behind your back or just hates Christians in general, changes them; that's not why we do it. We do it because Jesus says to do it, period. They have a need, we're in a position to meet that need, we respond. That's what Jesus' followers do. Because it shows them who Jesus is. What if they reject you and don't see it as God's loving act?

We do it even if we or they don't understand (vv.6-11)

Peter rejects Jesus' washing but Jesus says

⁷ Jesus replied, "You do not realize now what I am doing, but later you will understand." 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!" ¹⁰ Jesus answered, "A person who has had a bath needs only to wash his feet; his 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.

Peter doesn't understand that Jesus' is acting out the crucifixion. He's going to give His life – the Master and Rabbi – for His disciples, so that they can receive the benefit of eternal life. Peter and the others are also totally oblivious to Judas' treachery and that Jesus washed His feet too. Jesus sacrifices Himself for everyone's sins even if they don't understand and reject Him. They will learn one day unfortunately but by then it will be too late.

When Jesus says Peter and the others have already been bathed (clean) He's referring to their faith. He even repeats this in John 15:3 after Judas has left,

³ You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you

Clean refers to saved. Saved because they believe what the Word says about Jesus and accepted Him as Lord. Judas of course is not clean because he has rejected Jesus as his Lord. They didn't understand what He was saying at the time about who was unclean and they didn't understand that Jesus was acting out a parable of His crucifixion.

Unlike Jesus, we don't always know why God wants us to sacrificially serve each other let alone those who reject Jesus. He has a plan for it that we don't see at the moment but, we're still called to obey. That's what disciples do. And now Jesus explains this in vv.12-20.

¹⁵ I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. ¹⁶ I tell you the truth, 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.

¹⁸ "I am not referring to all of you; I know those I have chosen. But this is to fulfill the scripture: 'He who shares my bread has lifted up his heel against me.'

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

Why should we serve like this?

As a Demonstration of our Faith **(13:12-20)**

Jesus commands us to do what He did. Not to literally wash people's feet but to humble ourselves to do even unpleasant tasks to meet someone's need so it benefits them even if it also means making a sacrifice of time and resources. Jesus says 'Be like me. Do what I do. That's how you're blessed. Even to the ones who betray you because that shows you accept all people, you're willing to serve all people. V. 20 is one of those 'Truly, truly' sayings of Jesus. 'Listen up. Pay attention.'

'Whoever accepts anyone I send accepts Me.'" Jesus will send these disciples out after the resurrection, commissioning them to make disciples. Believing their message results in believing Jesus and the Father. This of course was prefaced by Jesus' warning that one of them had not accepted Jesus, that he would 'lift up his heel against me'. In other words, he has no faith because he never accepted Jesus. And He won't live as Jesus has asked. Judas was already livid a few days earlier when Lazarus' sister Mary poured expensive perfume on Jesus and Judas complained at the waste because he was upset he couldn't have gotten some money for it. Judas showed by his lack of faith he had no interest in sacrificing himself for other's needs.

How many of us want to be blessed by God? All of us hopefully but we don't all have the same definition of what it means to be blessed of God. In v.17 Jesus says we'll be blessed if we do the things we've been taught. Obedience results in blessing. What kind of blessing? Joy, contentment, knowing we are living a purposeful life by pleasing Jesus and the Father. Again later that night Jesus will say this in John 15

¹⁰ If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father's commands and remain in his love. ¹¹ I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete. ¹² My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. ¹³ Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends.

Jesus commands us to sacrificially serve one another. He says when we obey his commands we receive His joy. Now that we know this we are blessed if we do this.

In vv.21-30 Jesus will confront Judas himself, in a quiet way that the disciples are still unaware that Judas is the betrayer. He has misled everyone. They all thought he was a disciple. He played the part but his heart wasn't right. He stole money when no one is looking. He betrayed Jesus for 30 pieces of silver. But at the table Judas reclined to Jesus' left, one of two positions of honour; John's being the other. When Jesus quietly dipped the bread in the dish He and Judas and John probably shared, He was still serving the one who would mistreat Him. What was He doing when He did this?

He was Extending an Invitation of Grace **(13:21-30)**

Jesus was showing grace and love to Judas one more time. By announcing one of them was His betrayer without identifying Him, He was extending grace beyond Judas but to the one who was behind it all – Satan. He who shared in the heavenly throne room once as an angel, Lucifer, even He was shown grace. And in the sovereign plan of God, He used Satan's hatred and pride and Judas' greed to bring about the cross and our salvation. Through the resurrection. If we show humility and grace by serving others – who think we're losers – we still win.

The reason Jesus washed the disciples feet was to show the extent of His love for them, His willingness to serve them and meet their greatest need, dying for their sins. You and I are surrounded by people who don't know Jesus and our willingness to obey Jesus' command reveals our faith, and

invites them to have this same relationship with Jesus as we have. Will our acts of sacrificial kindness change their hearts? That's God's job. He will use our service to change hearts.

And even our own hearts; as we obey and serve Him and even as we serve and receive undeserved kindnesses from each other. Sometimes we have hard, unforgiving hearts too towards other believers. Serving one another sacrificially breaks up the hard heartedness of bitterness that lurks behind our hurt and paves the way for God's Spirit to work in us as we humbly serve and as we humbly receive kindness. Who did God bring to your mind today that you need to serve. Now that you know these things you will be blessed if you do them.

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If you have any comments or questions about this message please
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