

## Christ: An Example of Loving Service

---

John 13:1-17

John is the only Gospel writer that records the events of John 13-17. These events all take place in the “upper room” on the evening of the crucifixion within a six hour time frame.

Jesus knew *“his hour was come that he should depart out of this world unto the Father.”* Jesus lived on a “heavenly timetable—

- 2:4—*“Mine hour is not yet come.”*
- 7:30—*“...his hour was not yet come.”*
- 8:20—*“...his hour was not yet come.”*
- 12:23—*“The hour is come that the Son of man should be glorified.”*
- 13:1—*“Jesus knew that his hour was come...”* [Your hour to depart out of this world will come also.]
- 17:1—*“Father, the hour is come...”*

It is important to see how Jesus would spend His final hours with His disciples. In these intimate hours He would leave them with an example of LOVING SERVICE to follow...

### I. **A love that is CONSTANT to the end** (v. 1).

- JESUS KNEW Judas was about to betray Him (v. 1, 11 cf. 18:4).
- JESUS KNEW Peter would deny Him (13:38; Mk. 14:29-31).
- JESUS KNEW the disciples were about to jump ship and forsake Him.
- JESUS KNEW Thomas was going to doubt Him.

➡ Despite their imperfections... denials... betrayal... doubts... abandonment... He LOVED THEM.

A. Sometimes, ignorance is a blessing in disguise. I would rather not know what people think about me. I don't want their feelings about me to affect how I feel about them.

- We like to choose not only the place we want to serve, but also the people we want to serve! If some people knew that someone was about to betray them, or desert them in their hour of need, they would probably “unfriend” them!

- But not Jesus. He knew full well that His friends were about to turn their backs on Him. Yet, He loved them anyway! Would you still love someone if you knew they were about to stab you in the back? Would you serve them and wash their feet?
- B. This is an example Christ gave us to follow. Love your enemies. Aren't you glad Jesus loved you despite how sinful you were? Aren't you glad Jesus loved you when you were His enemy (Rom. 5:8-10— *"But God commented his love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us... For if when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son..."*)

## II. A Love that **CONDESCENDS** to humble service (vs. 2-5).

A. The **POSTURE** of washing feet. The only way you can wash another's feet is to kneel. Christ took a humble posture to serve.



B. The **PERSON** washing feet.

1. Foot-washing was not a big deal in Bible days. It was a common act of courtesy. What made this a big deal was **WHO WAS DOING THE FOOT-WASHING!** Normally, the task of foot-washing was the job of the lowliest servant. (cf. Phil 2:5-8)
2. Here is the Creator of the universe stooping to the filthiest and lowest part of human anatomy—smelly, nasty, dirty feet!.

## III. A Love that **CLEANSSES** spiritually (vs. 5-11).

- Peter couldn't understand why Jesus would do this (v. 6). He was just a common fisherman, and Jesus was the Christ, the Son of God. Peter's question is a similar to when Jesus came to John the Baptist to be baptized—*"John forbid Him, saying, I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me?"* (Mt. 3:14).
- Although Peter could not understand it at that moment, he would understand later (v. 7). There are somethings about God's doings that may not be clear to us now, but someday we'll understand. We just need to trust God that He knows what He is doing!

➤ **Two-fold application** of Christ washing Peter's feet (vs. 5-11)

A. Our COOPERATION in salvation—

1. The blood of Christ cleanses us from all sin. But this cleansing is not possible without the **cooperation** of the sinner—Jesus shed His blood for our cleansing, but we must agree to be cleansed. The Lord will not force anyone to be cleansed.
2. Verse 8— The Lord is telling Peter, “Either you let Me wash you, or you are not Mine.”

B. Our CLEANSING in sanctification (vs. 5-10). It is the **difference between a bath and a washing our hands**.

1. Salvation is like a bath, where we are totally cleansed of sin by the blood of Christ. Sanctification is where we are cleansed daily from the filth of the world (2 Cor 7:1).
2. “*Feet*” refer to our “daily walk.” As we walk in this filthy world our feet get dirty.
  - The word “*part*” (v. 8) carries the meaning of “participation,”—being involved in something or with someone. Therefore, we need daily cleansing to maintain our fellowship with the Lord.
3. Peter didn't need a complete bath (vs. 9-10). He was already clean. He just needed his dirty feet cleansed with the water in the basin. [Judas was completely unclean.]
4. Water speaks of the Word (Eph. 5:26). Jesus said, “*You are clean through the Word which I have spoken unto you*” (John 15:3). Psalm 119:9: “*Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto according to thy word.*” The more time a person spends in the Word of God, the cleaner he is going to be.
5. The Old Testament Priest is an illustration of this cleansing:
  - When a priest was first ordained, he was washed from head to toe in a ceremonial bathing (Ex. 29:4). From that point on, he never again needed a head-to-toe cleansing.

- Before entering the tabernacle, he must first wash his hands and feet in the laver (Ex. 30:18). Otherwise, although he would still be a priest, he wouldn't be allowed access to the Tabernacle and not be able to minister before the Lord.
- As the priests needed a continual cleansing of their hands and feet, we need regular cleansing from the filth of the world.

#### **IV. A Love that CHARACTERIZES true leadership** (vs. 12-17).

- A. v. 12—*“Know ye what I have done to you?”* Jesus gave an example of true leadership (v. 15) and how to be truly happy (v. 17).
- *“A really great man is one who makes others feel great.”* — G.K. Chesterton

---

ILLUS: Luke 22:24-27—*“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.**”*

---

- Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus (Phil. 2:3-5).
- B. No one earns the right to lead until he has learned the way to serve. No one is qualified as a true leader who has not first qualified as a true servant.

---

Some of the most profitable years in my ministry was serving under Pastor Ken Blue— Mixing cement... repairing church buses... hanging sheet rock... installing a suspended ceiling... Editing the radio broadcast. It helped prepare me to lead others.

---

**SUMMATION:** John 13:17 is the key—*“If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them.”* **The sequence is important: humbleness... holiness...**

**then happiness.** Happiness is the by-product of living in obedience to God by serving others.

Next time you feel depressed or downhearted, do what Jesus did. Instead of “throwing in the towel,” pick up a towel and basin of water and find some “dirty feet” to wash! Of course, in this age, people wear shoes, not sandals, so we would not wash literal dirty feet. But we could wash somebody’s car... their windows... wash someone’s laundry/diapers... or some dirty dishes in the church kitchen, without being asked. Find some lowly menial job that would require you to humble yourself to do it. You will experience the happiness Jesus promised.

Samuel Logan Brengle was a very talented student. When he graduated from college many doors were open to him. He chose to train for the ministry and join the Salvation Army. Upon joining the leaders of the Salvation Army assigned him the task of polishing the boots of all the Salvation Army officers in training with him.

As he considered the eighteen pairs of boots, he faced a choice between being insulted or being obedient. Later Brengle wrote in his journal: “I could see my Lord—who had come from the bosom of the everlasting Father and the glories of Heaven and the adoration of its hosts—bending over the feet of uncouth, unlearned fishermen, washing them, humbling Himself, taking the form of a servant. I immediately fell on my knees and prayed: ‘Lord, You washed their feet; I will polish their boots.’” Brengle went on to become the first American to reach the rank of Commissioner in the Salvation Army.

Our calling is not to be lifted up, but to humble ourselves and serve. Jesus said, “*Whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted.*” (Mt. 23:12).

Just as the branch that bears the most fruit bows the lowest, the one who is the most fruitful in the things of God will bow the lowest to serve others.