

## Serving Like Jesus

*John 13:1-17*

### Introduction

This morning, we are looking at serving one another in the church. God is answering our prayers, filling our NextGen ministry with the littlest of children all the way up to the biggest of teenagers. And because of God's blessing, we have needs. We need more people to serve in our NextGen ministry. And I believe that God intends to meet these needs through you, His people, today. I believe, with all of my heart, that God will provide everything that we need, exactly when we need it for His glory and our good. In keeping with that belief, my prayer this morning is that as you consider the character and call of Jesus in John 13 today, you will be grateful for what He has done and is doing for you and will respond to the opportunity to serve here at Copperfield Church.

But my goal this morning is not guilt. Guilt is a terrible motivator. Guilt will get your name on a piece of paper, but it will not sustain you to serve well. I know this all too well. When I was a kid, I used to overdub secular songs onto my Christian tapes. I would sit by the radio with my Steve Green or Point of Grace tape in my cassette deck and wait until the new Snoop Dog or Dr. Dre song would come on the radio and then hit record. I had a decent little collection of such cassette tapes. But I tore them up each year after camp. You see, I would go to children's and youth camps, fill up with guilt, come home, and resolve to change in my own strength, which meant getting rid of all that secular music, but my motivation was not "greater love for God" or "gratitude for His grace." My motivation was just fear and guilt. And that motivation only lasted a week or two at best. And then I was right back to my old ways.

My hope this morning is that you will see the beauty of Christ's humble service and be filled with gratitude and moved by His grace to serve others in the church. And specifically, given that our greatest service need right now is in our NextGen ministry, my prayer is that you will humble yourself to serve those whom God is entrusting to us.

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### John 13:1-17

<sup>1</sup> It was just before the Passover Festival. 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.

<sup>2</sup> The evening meal was in progress, and the devil had already prompted Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot, to betray Jesus. <sup>3</sup> Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under his power, and that he had come from God and was returning to God; <sup>4</sup> so he got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist. <sup>5</sup> 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.

<sup>6</sup> He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, "Lord, are you going to wash my feet?"

<sup>7</sup> Jesus replied, "You do not realize now what I am doing, but later you will understand."

<sup>8</sup> "No," said Peter, "you shall never wash my feet."

Jesus answered, "Unless I wash you, you have no part with me."

<sup>9</sup> "Then, Lord," Simon Peter replied, "not just my feet but my hands and my head as well!"

<sup>10</sup> Jesus answered, "Those who have had a bath need only to wash their feet; their whole body is clean. And you are clean, though not every one of you." <sup>11</sup> For he knew who was going to betray him, and that was why he said not every one was clean.

<sup>12</sup> When he had finished washing their feet, he put on his clothes and returned to his place. "Do you understand what I have done for you?" he asked them. <sup>13</sup> "You call me 'Teacher' and 'Lord,' and rightly so, for that is what I am. <sup>14</sup> Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. <sup>15</sup> I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. <sup>16</sup> Very truly I tell you, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. <sup>17</sup> Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them."

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## Exposition

There is so much that could be said about John 13, but for this morning, I want to focus on Christ's example for service...

### **I. Our Service Should Shock the World (Vv. 1-11)**

If there was ever a person who was worthy enough only ever to be served rather than to serve, it was Jesus. Yet, in John 13:1-11, we encounter the most service-worthy human being ever to live take on a task so menial that most Jews in Jesus' day would not allow their fellow Jews to perform the task. It was often a form of service reserved for those regarded as the "lowest of the low." What was the task? Feet washing.

Now, it might be a little hard for us to conceive of how menial this task really was because we do not live in the same times. You might not like the thought of touching someone's feet, or, as we all know, feet often are considered one of the "less-than-nice-smelling" parts of the human body. But even then, we don't fully grasp what it means to wash a person's feet in the 1<sup>st</sup> century. While a person's body might have been cleansed through a bath, a person's feet were almost always dirty due to their open sandals and dirt roads that they constantly traversed. Thus, there was no shortage of dirty feet to be washed, which required the servant who washed them to get dirty themselves by getting down on the ground, washing, and then drying a person's feet.

And what we find in verses 1-11 is the Creator of Feet humbling Himself to be the Cleaner of Feet. And this is shocking! In fact, it is so shocking that Peter, ever one to share his opinion, forbids Jesus to wash his feet. Peter protests, yet Jesus insists that His humble service is vital for the salvation of His disciples. In this way, Jesus' act of service, of washing the feet of His disciples, is pointing to the most humble act of service that He would perform, submission to the will of God by becoming a curse for sinners on the cross.

Jesus' service was shocking to His disciples, but given what we know of this story, it ought to be at least a little shocking to us as well. Why? I believe that it should be shocking to us as well because in Jesus' humble service, we see Him perform and act that is so out of sorts with the way our world thinks! We see Jesus, having already known that He was going to be betrayed, we see Jesus washing Judas' feet. Jesus not only served the ignorant and arrogant ones like Peter, but He served the deceitful and treacherous like Judas. Furthermore, He would serve the doubters like Thomas. Jesus served others not because they were qualified or deserving but because they need to be served!

This is unbelievable! And yet, it is so glorious too! This is exactly how Jesus served you and me! We, like Peter, Judas, and Thomas, are, in and of ourselves, unworthy recipients of service from God. Yet, in His great love and humility, He dons the towel, prepares the water, bows himself low, and cleanses us. That is what the foot-washing in John 13 was intended to point the disciples to. They were to see in Jesus' humble act that greatness in God's kingdom was not sitting on thrones of authority but in loving and serving others, even those who do not seem worthy of such service!

Christ-like service is shocking to the onlooking world. It doesn't make sense until God gives us eyes to see what it means. As Jesus told Peter, "You will understand this later." And now we, viewing the work of Christ from this side of the cross, understand that Christ's humble service is why we have hope in this life. Christ's humble service is our only hope of being cleansed from our sins and made whole. If Christ did not humble Himself and serve us, we would all perish, condemned by our sins, but Christ did humble Himself and did come to seek and save the lost. Christ did come to serve instead of being served, that we might be forgiven of our rebellion against Him if we would call upon Him in faith and ask Him to save us.

This is the crucial point of the passage. We must see that Christ's humble service was for our salvation. Yet, He still intends to draw out an implication of His service for our service, which is the next point in verses 12-17...

## II. Our Service Ought to Imitate Jesus (Vv. 12-17)

Jesus concludes His teaching on service by pointing to His example. When we serve others, we ought to imitate Jesus' service. Now, to be sure, this does not mean that our service is exactly like Jesus' service. Jesus' service is unique in that His service results in the cleansing of our consciences from the guilt of our sins. Our service does not contribute to the salvation work that Jesus accomplished on the cross. When Jesus declared, "It is finished," in John 19, the work that secures our salvation was complete. We do not add to the work of Jesus with our service.

So, then, in what way does our service imitate Jesus? This is found in verses 12-17, where Jesus exhorts His disciples to the menial, humble service of others. In other words, His disciples, those who follow Jesus, could never look at an opportunity for service and say, "You know, I'm above that. I've graduated. I don't do those types of things anymore." That is not the spirit of a disciple, a servant of Christ.

I can remember asking for people to help in the nursery at a former church. I was pleading. I was pointing out the need and the opportunity. And I had one lady approach me after the service, and as long as I am of a sound mind, I don't think I will ever forget what she said, "You know, pastor, when I had kids, I worked in the nursery. But now my kids are grown. I did my time back there. Other people can do it now." How do you reconcile that type of thinking with Jesus' comment at the end of John 13:16, "Very truly I tell you, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him?"

Brothers and sisters, disciples of Christ, do you believe that you are greater than Jesus? Do you believe that there is just some Christian service that you have graduated from? That you are too good for? Too mature for? Too busy for? O' brothers and sisters, we are not greater than our master, who humbled himself as the creator of feet to be the cleaner of feet.

**"But I'm too busy, pastor. I just don't have time."** Jesus was preparing for the cross when He washed the disciples' feet. There's always time to obey God.

**"But I don't feel appreciated when I serve, pastor."** Jesus washed the feet of the man who would betray Him just hours later. We serve for God's glory, not man's applause.

**“But I feel like God has called me to bigger things, pastor. I don’t think he wants me to work with kids or teenagers. There’s no way He’s calling me to change diapers.”**

Jesus washed the feet of grown men. The values of the Kingdom of God are not the values of the Kingdom of this world. The world tells us that children are a burden. In fact, the world tells us that it would be better for children just to be aborted than served. The world tells us that the youth are a lost cause. Why bother? The world and the devil hate to see children and students cared for in loving homes, disciplined by faithful parents, and ministered to in the context of the local church. The devil and his angels desperately want you to believe that serving others, even children, is a waste of time and that there are other things you should be doing.

But Jesus points in another direction. He says, “If want to be close with me, if you want to be like me, if you want to know true greatness, I’m down here, with a wash basin and towel, cleaning feet, serving the undeserving.”

### **Conclusion**

As servants of Christ, we are called to shock the world with Christ-like service to others. Such a life of service is a life of blessing, as Jesus Himself tells us in John 13:17, “Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them.”

Would you know this life of blessed service this morning?

Would you humble yourself and embrace the life of Christ-like service that God is calling each of us to today?

Would you ask the LORD in prayer as we close if He is calling you to serve the Next Generation at Copperfield Church?

Would you ask Him to give you the courage to take the next step in obedience to His call?